

TOS 4402

# African Bird Club



**Bulletin of the African Bird Club**

**Vol 18 No 2 September 2011**

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avifauna of Benin

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a species?

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A summary of  
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# African Bird Club

## The African Bird Club aims to:

- provide a worldwide focus for African ornithology
- encourage an interest in the conservation of the birds of the region
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- publish a twice-yearly colour bulletin
- encourage observers to visit lesser known areas of the region
- encourage observers to actively search for globally threatened and near-threatened species
- run the ABC Conservation Programme

Registered Charity No 1053920

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Membership is open to all. Annual subscription rates are:

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Family	Europe & Africa: UK£21	Rest of the World: UK£23
Student	Europe & Africa: UK£10	Rest of the World: UK£12
Supporting	UK£30 minimum	
Life	UK£350	

To join or for further details please visit the ABC website (where there are secure online payment facilities) or write to the Membership Secretary—see contact information below.

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<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>

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ABC is always looking for drawings and photos to publish in the Bulletin. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the Graphics Editor, Pete Leonard, [pleonard@care4free.net](mailto:pleonard@care4free.net)

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The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No

material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the Bulletin of the ABC and to any other publication.

Brief notes for contributors appear elsewhere in this Bulletin and further details are available from the Editor ([editor@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:editor@africanbirdclub.org)).

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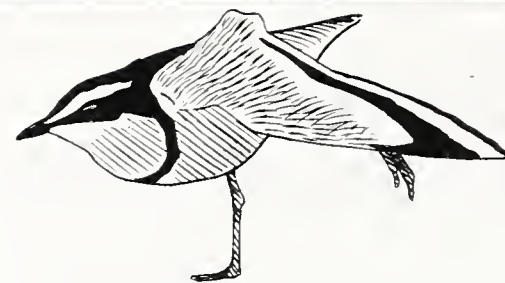
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# Club News



## ABC 2011 London meeting and AGM

On 16 April 2011, around 70 members and guests attended the ABC Annual Meeting at the Swedenborg Hall in central London, UK. The event included the Club's 17th AGM.

After a brief opening address from ABC Chairman, Keith Betton, the meeting heard about BirdLife's plans for Africa from Paul Kariuki Ndag'ang'a, who is the organisation's Africa Species Programme Manager based in Nairobi, Kenya. This was an extra talk added on the day, as Paul happened to be in the UK for another conference.

The main programme then commenced with a presentation by James Bray on conserving the birds of coastal forests in Tanzania. As a recipient of funds from ABC's Conservation Fund in 2008, he and several colleagues had studied these

forests which are a globally important hotspot for avian biodiversity but are potentially threatened by harvesting of East African Blackwood *Dalbergia melanoxylon* trees (Mpingo in Swahili). The team has written a report detailing the methods used and distribution and abundance of bird species within Mpingo forests around Kilwa, detailing the probable impacts of harvesting on Mpingo forest avifauna.

Danaë Sheehan talked about her work at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), which involves encouraging people to count birds in several African countries. She explained that the Global Wild Bird Index (GWBI) project aims to develop a global Wild Bird Index that measures population trends of a representative suite of birds to act as a barometer of the general health of the environment. The project will work closely with the web-based WorldBirds, to additionally support

the collation of data in the form of species lists and bird surveys. In collaboration with the BirdLife Africa Partnership secretariat, the GWBI project is currently supporting the development of new schemes in three African countries: Uganda, Rwanda and Botswana.

Kabelo Senyatso explained his studies on the conservation status of Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori* across its entire African range. Formerly Director of BirdLife Botswana, he is currently studying at the University of East Anglia. His talk included a review of the species' status across Africa, its response to land use designation, human movement patterns and habitat use.

Tim Mackrill outlined his own work on the migration and wintering behaviour of Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* tracked from the UK to Africa. Based on studies at Rutland Water in the UK, Tim highlighted the challenges that Ospreys face when migrating, with young birds often heading too far west as they move south in autumn. In comparison, adults manage to learn better routes over time, and in particular this underlined the value of long-term satellite tracking.

Sarah Sanders, also of the RSPB, spoke about bird conservation challenges in the South Atlantic UK Overseas Territories. In particular she focused on Tristan da Cunha and especially the disaster just a month earlier when the *MS Oliva* ran aground on the far north-west promontory of Nightingale Island. Sarah described the operation to clean several thousand Rockhopper Penguins *Eudyptes chrysocome* that had become covered in the ship's cargo of oil (see also p. 141). The cost of the operation was substantial, so ABC decided to donate to the RSPB all of the money collected on the day of the AGM to help with the



Speakers at the ABC London meeting and AGM, April 2011, from left to right: Paul Kariuki Ndag'ang'a, Tim Mackrill, Sarah Sanders, Danaë Sheehan, Kabelo Senyatso, Tasso Leventis and James Bray (Keith Betton)

Conférenciers à l'Assemblée générale annuelle de l'ABC, Londres, avril 2011 ; de gauche à droite : Paul Kariuki Ndag'ang'a, Tim Mackrill, Sarah Sanders, Danaë Sheehan, Kabelo Senyatso, Tasso Leventis et James Bray (Keith Betton)



clean-up costs—doubling the total from its own funds to UK£1,250.

Finally, ABC's President Tasso Leventis shared his photographs from several tours of the Obudu Plateau in Nigeria, which is an Important Bird Area covering 72,000 ha. Situated in the south-east of the country, close to the border with Cameroon, the area is wet and mountainous with a plateau at c.1,500 m and peaks which rise to 1,700 m. Many habitats exist, including a large area of montane grassland crossed by numerous perennial mountain streams flowing through the valleys. Tasso managed to show the meeting over 200 photographs in 45 minutes, which is probably an ABC record!

### Major milestones for African Bird Images and sound-recordings reached in April 2011

Two major milestones were reached in April 2011. The 2,000th species was loaded onto the African Bird Image Database (AFBID) of photographs ([www.birdexplorers.com/afbid](http://www.birdexplorers.com/afbid)) and the 1,000th species onto Xeno-canto Africa ([www.xeno-canto.org](http://www.xeno-canto.org)), the community database of shared bird sounds from Africa. These two databases represent a superb resource for all birders with an interest in African ornithology. We plan to maintain them as primary resources for African ornithology for many years to come.

AFBID was launched in August 2005 as a joint project between the African Bird Club, Bird Explorers ([www.birdexplorers.com](http://www.birdexplorers.com)) and Birding Africa ([www.birdingafrica.com](http://www.birdingafrica.com)). Since the launch, the database has been popular with photographers and over 700 have loaded more than 16,000 images taken in the African region. Many people use the database for help with identification or simply to browse the incredible variety of avian life in continental Africa and its related islands. A comprehensive range of search capabilities permits the user to find images of particular species and to view different species within countries. Special thanks go to Nik Borrow, Pete Leonard, Callan Cohen and Michael Mills for



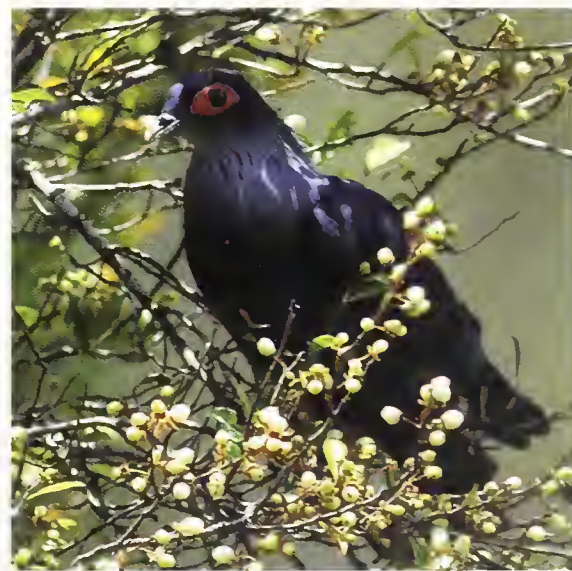
Map showing localities for African bird sound-recordings stored on [www.xeno-canto.org/africa](http://www.xeno-canto.org/africa)

Carte montrant les localités des enregistrements des vocalisations d'oiseaux africains déposés sur [www.xeno-canto.org/africa](http://www.xeno-canto.org/africa)

their ongoing help in this work, and also to Nik for adding an amazing 1,389 of his own images to the database. Birding Africa's Callan Cohen, who provided the image for the 2,000th species, said "AFBID offers an unparalleled resource for the identification of African birds—a virtual museum for comparing species and subspecies across the continent." Kevin Vang and Wojciech Dabrowka set up Bird Explorers as a non-profit organisation designed to promote bird and wildlife conservation through photography. Kevin said "Congratulations for the milestones. Those are great achievements, and it is great being in partnership with the ABC."

Xeno-canto Africa was launched in March 2008 as a part of Xeno-canto (XC), the leading website for the storage and retrieval of bird songs and calls. The development is a joint initiative between Willem-Pier Vellinga and Bob Planque of XC and the African Bird Club. XC is supported long

term by the Netherlands Centre for Biodiversity, Naturalis. The system has comprehensive features including powerful search and mapping capabilities, and a forum for the discussion of mystery songs. Sixty sound recordists in Africa have contributed nearly 3,000 recordings



Madagascar Blue Pigeon / Founingo bleu *Alectroenas madagascariensis*, Anzojorobe, Madagascar, November 2010 (Callan Cohen / [www.birdingafrica.com](http://www.birdingafrica.com))



representing more than 23 hours and over 1,000 species.

Willem-Pier Vellinga said “Xeno-canto is *the* place for bird sounds on the web and it now has recordings of over 7,300 species. Whether global professional or local amateur, anyone can share their recordings. XC organises the recordings and data in such a way that the combined global collections of all recordists become one collection easily accessible to the whole community. Based on its high use by scientists and birdwatchers, it is clearly a very valuable collection of recordings. Poor internet access in many parts of Africa has probably limited the growth of recordings from that continent and most of the uploads to XC Africa are performed by visitors and scientists when they return home. The rate at which new contributions are being made however seems to be increasing this year but there are still many opportunities to contribute to XC Africa, as can be seen on a map of recording distribution. You are invited to head out to less-visited areas and chart their bird sounds!”

*Contributed by John Caddick*

### **Slaty Egret Workshop in Maun**

BirdLife Botswana organised and hosted an international workshop on the Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula* in March 2011, held at the Thamalakane River Lodge near Maun, overlooking the Thamalakane River at the southern edge of the Okavango Delta. The workshop

was co-organised by the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and its aim was to initiate the development of a Single Species Action Plan for the Slaty Egret. This egret is globally threatened (Vulnerable) because it has a small population, estimated at 3,000–5,000 birds, and occurs in a limited area of central / southern Africa, with Botswana, Namibia and Zambia holding the bulk of the population. Small numbers are resident in or visitors to Zimbabwe, South Africa, Angola and Mozambique, and the species might also be present in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Delegates from the AEWA Secretariat, from BirdLife International’s Kenya office and from governments and NGOs in most range states attended the workshop. Research priorities and threats to the species were discussed at length as were the actions needed to halt any declines.

A highlight was a field trip into Moremi Game Reserve, where 13 Slaty Egrets, including immatures and adults in breeding plumage, were seen. The field trip not only enabled all delegates to observe the species but also to see the problems associated with studying it, such as the difficulty in gaining access to heronries because of flooding, the vast size of the Okavango Delta and the limited number of vehicle tracks, not to mention the presence of dangerous mammals and crocodiles.

*Contributed by Steph Tyler*



Participants at the Slaty Egret Workshop in Maun, Botswana, March 2011 (Steph Tyler)

Participants à l'atelier sur l'Aigrette vineuse à Maun, Botswana, mars 2011 (Steph Tyler)

### **Dale Hanmer—a tribute**

I was in Botswana in late February 2011 preparing for the Slaty Egret Workshop when I heard from Julia Cecil, Dale Hanmer’s daughter, that her mother had sadly died on 2 March. Anyone who has birded in Malaŵi or Zimbabwe will have known of Dale and her monumental ringing studies in both countries. She was a prolific writer of papers on a range of subjects, notably moult and biometrics, based on her ringing work. She published widely in journals such as *Scopus* and *Honeyguide*, and also contributed to several Pan-African Ornithological Congresses.

After many years living in the Lower Shire Valley, she moved to Mutare in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. She continued ringing in Zimbabwe at wonderful sites such as Vumba Botanic Gardens where she studied sunbirds. In May 2003 she received a small grant from the ABC Conservation Fund to study the altitudinal migration of robins.

She only left Zimbabwe two years ago and had settled in a small bungalow in Suffolk where she intended to write up more of her work. Sadly this was not to be. She will, however, be long remembered for all her ornithological studies, as well as for being a remarkable woman. For a detailed obituary, see p. 247.

*Contributed by Steph Tyler*

### **ABC AGM 2012**

Next year’s ABC Annual Meeting and AGM will be held on Saturday 21 April at the headquarters of the British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU. As usual there will be a range of illustrated talks covering topics connected with bird conservation in Africa. Books, CDs and other items will be on sale. Full details will be published in early 2012. Check the ABC website for further details.





The ABC Conservation Awards have recently attracted several generous new sponsors, significantly boosting the number of grants possible. In large part this has been due to the efforts of the ABC Conservation Committee, who volunteer their services to review and comment on proposals, and provide Council with considered recommendations as to which merit funding. This ensures that sponsors can be confident that their donations support good-quality research projects with achievable aims. I would like to thank outgoing Conservation Committee member, Hazell Thompson, former Head of the African Secretariat of BirdLife International, for his many valuable contributions over the years.

### **New Awards**

#### **Detecting changes in the habitat and status of Hinde's Babbler**

At a recent Council meeting, UK£940 was awarded for a study of the globally Vulnerable Hinde's Babbler *Turdoides hindei*, by Phil Shaw of St. Andrew's University and Peter Njoroge of the National Museums of Kenya. In 2000–01 a systematic survey was conducted at six of the seven sites known to support populations of this Kenyan endemic. The survey provided estimates of the species' global population and range, its rate of decline, and revealed a positive, non-linear relationship between thicket cover, babbler density and breeding success. This suggested that even a moderate increase in thicket cover might substantially improve the species' density and productivity at some sites. Hinde's Babbler densities were highest at two unprotected Important Bird Areas (IBAs), the Mukurweini and Kianyaga Valleys, where intensive cultivation threatened the species' remaining habitat. During the intervening decade an IBA support group has helped to raise local awareness of the species' threatened status and habitat requirements. Nonetheless, since 2004 the Kenya IBA monitoring programme has recorded a 'large deterioration' in habitat quality at Mukurweini and Kianyaga, and at a third IBA important for the species, Machakos Valleys. The 2000–01 survey was designed to be easily

repeatable. The current project aims to re-survey these three sites in July 2011, to determine the extent of any change in the species' habitat, density and breeding success over the intervening 10–11 years. This will provide a reliable, detailed assessment of population and habitat trends; enable the update of an existing draft action plan for Hinde's Babbler; and provide *NatureKenya* with an up-to-date summary, which could help raise national awareness of the species' global status. The project has also received part funding from the British Ornithologists' Union, and the generous sponsorship of the ABC award by Olle Holst of Avifauna permitted the study to go ahead.

#### **Avifaunal survey of the Lake Kenyatta ecosystem**

Maurice Ogoma of the National Museums of Kenya was awarded UK£999.85 for avifaunal surveys of the ornithologically little-known Lake Kenyatta in the Lamu District of Kenya, 230 km north of Malindi. The lake and its subcatchment currently face myriad problems including degradation through forest encroachment, overgrazing during drought, excessive agricultural fertiliser application, over-fishing and human–wildlife conflicts. There have been no previous biodiversity surveys of the Lake Kenyatta ecosystem. To effectively 'market' the lake and its environs for 'avian' tourism, information on the status of its avifauna is a key priority. The survey will produce the first-ever bird checklist of the area, record other taxa and provide baseline data for future research. In addition, the project will assess current threats to the site, and train at least two community guides in basic bird identification techniques. ABC is most grateful to Paul Bristow and Tasso Leventis, who jointly sponsored this award.

#### **Population survey and threat assessment of Williams's Lark in northern Kenya**

An award of UK£1,090, made to Solomon Kipkoech of the National Museums of Kenya, was jointly sponsored by Paul Lascelles (Hyde-Lascelles) and Stephen Pringle. Williams's Lark *Mirafra williamsi* is classified as Data Deficient by BirdLife International and is endemic to





Williams's Lark / Alouette de Williams *Mirafrilla williamsi* (David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

rocky lava deserts of northern Kenya. These deserts are unique habitats, represented in Kenya by Dida Galgalu Desert (north of Marsabit) and parts of Shaba National Reserve, which two sites are the sole localities for Williams's Lark. The project will aim to determine the species' local densities in Dida Galgalu Desert (a rarely visited IBA), assess potential threats to the species and its unique habitat, and estimate the global population size by also using results from a recent survey of Shaba National Reserve undertaken by Solomon. The Conservation Committee was so enthused by this proposal that several members expressed their desire to join the expedition!

### **Population estimate of Red-shouldered Vanga in south-west Madagascar**

Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* was discovered as recently as 1997, and is known only from a very small area of spiny forest in south-west Madagascar around Saint-Augustin, the Menarandra River and Tsimanampesotse National Park. The aims of the project—submitted by Malagasy researcher Sama Zefania—are: (i) to assess the species' potential range between the Onilahy and Menarandra rivers; (ii) assess population densities in different habitats and hence determine the most important areas for the species; (iii) train local people, including protected area staff, in surveying the species, and (iv) disseminate knowledge about the species to Madagascar National Parks and tourists agencies. Council awarded UK£991



Red-shouldered Vanga / Calicalic à épaules rousses *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* (Solohery Rasamison)

to the project, which was jointly funded by donations from Paul Bristow and Stephen Pringle.

### **Environmental education in Malaŵi**

An award of UK£1,496 was made to the Zomba branch of the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malaŵi (WESM) to undertake environmental education in several hundreds of school wildlife clubs in and around the Ramsar site of Lake Chilwa. For some years this work had been supported by funding from DANIDA. The ABC funding will provide a further six-months' salary for a Wildlife Club Coordinator working in Phalombe District, in the Lake Chilwa basin, enabling him to disseminate a recently published Bird Activity Book. This is intended to take the children out of the classroom and involve them in activities that will increase their interest and knowledge of birds, and consequently give them a greater sense of the need to conserve creatures that are mainly considered as sport or food.

### **Survey of Karamoja Apalis in eastern Uganda**

An award of UK£540, generously sponsored by Paul Lascelles (Hyde-Lascelles), was made to *NatureUganda*. During a bird population monitoring survey in early 2011 of the Irimi region of eastern Uganda, c.70 km west of Moroto, a *NatureUganda* team recorded six individuals of the globally Vulnerable and range-restricted Karamoja Apalis *Apalis karamojae* in





Karamoja Apalis / Apalis du Karamoja *Apalis karamojae*  
(Adam Riley / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

dwarf *Acacia drepanolobium* scrub. The few previous Ugandan records of this species involved specimens taken on Mounts Moroto and Napak, and sight records from Kidepo Valley National Park, most recently in 1998. These observations may represent an extension of the species' range, if the sightings were not simply due to local seasonal movements. The project aims to conduct a much more extensive survey of the Irii region to confirm the status and distribution of the apalis there.

## Reports

### Status and viability of Lilian's Lovebird in Malawi

At the June 2010 Council meeting an award of UK£960 was approved for a study of the Near Threatened Lilian's Lovebird *Agapornis lilianae* by Tiwonge Mzumara (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 4). This study aimed to assess the current status of the lovebird in Liwonde National Park and also to investigate the hunting activities of communities around the park. Data collection was conducted in May–July 2010 and in late September–mid December 2010. The four main data collection methods were transect walks, drive transects, waterhole counts and point counts. These methods were used at three main bases (Chinguni, Mvuu and Mpwapwata) to ensure even coverage of the park. In total, 17 transect walks, five waterhole counts and five drive transects were completed. Overall, 2,113

lovebirds were recorded with the largest numbers in Mvuu-Sanctuary and Mpwapwata, especially along Lake Malombe. The lowest numbers were recorded in the Chinguni area. Lovebirds are widely distributed throughout the park, with sightings from Namisundu River northwards.

Lilian's Lovebirds were mainly observed foraging on seeds of *Acacia xanthophlea* and fruits of *Capparis tomentosa* in the south and centre of the park. In the north, however, in addition to these two species, they also fed on the petals, sepals and immature fruits of *Adamsonia digitata* and the fruits of some *Ficus* spp. Lovebirds were also recorded feeding on seeds of herbs and grasses on the ground. Three roost sites were identified, one in the south, one in the Rhino Sanctuary and another between Masanje and Mvuu. A minimum of four nest cavities was found at each site, and sites are probably breeding sites as birds used the same holes until mid February. Head bobbing by males, which forms part of the species' courtship behaviour, was first recorded in November.

During this study only one poisoned waterhole was found, probably because of the increased patrols introduced by the park's management. Poacher activity, however, was still evident during transects. Only two of the communities questioned admitted hunting in the park, but the remainder mentioned hunting in other areas. A few households admitted hunting other parrots too. Hunting in the park is a seasonal event, which occurs mainly in the dry season. However, it also occurs in nearby agricultural fields throughout the year. Communities set traps for the lovebirds in their gardens as they view the birds as a pest. The use of poison was only mentioned during focus group discussions. Most respondents mentioned traps and 'bird rubbering' as the main hunting methods.

In conclusion, there appears to be a viable population of lovebirds in the park. They are directly targeted in fields outside the park and it is important to understand what proportion of the population leaves the park to forage in planted fields. This will determine the percentage of the population at risk from hunting and where.





Aberdare Cisticola / Cisticole des Aberdare *Cisticola aberdare* (David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

### **Ecology and conservation status of Aberdare Cisticola in Aberdares National Park, Kenya**

This project was undertaken by Philista Malaki of the National Museums of Kenya in 2010 (see *Bull. ABC* 17: 149). Aberdare Cisticola *Cisticola aberdare* is classified as Endangered and is endemic to central Kenya, where it is locally common in suitable habitat on both sides of the Rift Valley, at Molo, Mau Narok and in the Aberdare Mountains. The survey, which was conducted in mid-March 2011, involved a series of transects in the central moorlands of Aberdares National Park. It confirmed the presence of reasonable numbers of Aberdare Cisticola in suitable habitat. A total of 137 individuals (10% of them young) was counted within an area of 35.6 ha, yielding an estimated density of four birds / ha. Aberdare Cisticolas were recorded in reasonable numbers throughout

all parts of Aberdares National Park visited, except for Kiandongoro and Mutubio Gates. Philista's observations clearly confirmed that Aberdares National Park continues to provide suitable habitat for the species. As a result, management of its preferred habitat is required to prevent bushes and shrubs naturally encroaching grasslands.

The field visit was well timed as it coincided with the onset of the rains and the birds' breeding season. During the survey, Aberdare Cisticola was recorded at five breeding stages: displaying, nest building, incubation, feeding young (at the nest), and feeding dependent fledged young out of the nest.

To better understand the ecology and conservation requirements of Aberdare Cisticola, further field studies are needed concentrating on its breeding biology including dispersal and nesting success. Given the importance of tussock grassland and moors to this species, the ecological impacts of invasive weeds, fires and grazing by herbivores also require study, to permit active habitat management for the species.

*Dr Chris Magin, on behalf of the Conservation Committee*

### **Conservation Awards milestone**

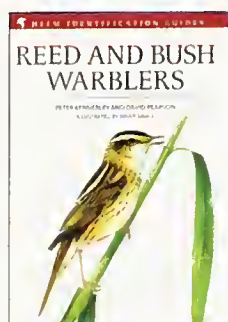
The ABC website ([www.africanbirdclub.org/club/consfund\\_projects.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/club/consfund_projects.html)) shows the complete list of Conservation Awards made since the inception of the programme over a decade ago. **A remarkable total in excess of UK£100,000 has been donated during this period.** You can also view many of the final project reports on this page.





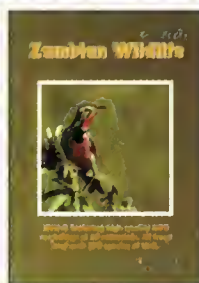
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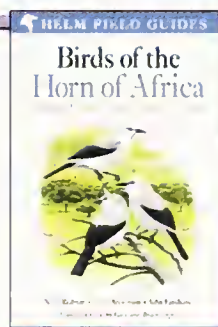
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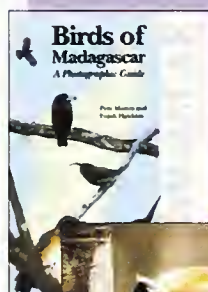
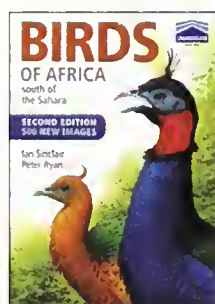
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# Africa Round-up

Compiled by Ron Demey, Guy M. Kirwan and Peter Lack



## General

### Category changes of threatened birds 2011

The latest update to the IUCN Red List for birds, released by BirdLife International in June 2011, brings the total number of globally threatened bird species to 1,253, an alarming 12% of the world total. Of the 67 category changes, seven resulted from a genuine change in the status of species, 34 were a result of improved knowledge and 26 resulted from taxonomic revisions (either recently published or recently evaluated / re-evaluated by BirdLife). In the region covered by the African Bird Club, the category of 13 species changed. Two raptors that were previously Least Concern are now threatened: Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* is Endangered, whilst Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius* is Vulnerable. The newly recognised Socotra Buzzard *Buteo socotraensis* joins the list as Vulnerable (see *Bull. ABC* 17: 156–157). The situation of three species of Gulf of Guinea pigeon deteriorated: São Tomé Olive Pigeon *Columba thomensis* is now Endangered (previously Vulnerable), São Tomé Green Pigeon *Treron sanctithomae* Vulnerable and São Tomé Bronze-naped Pigeon *Columba malherbii* Near Threatened (both previously Least Concern). The recently split Príncipe Thrush *Turdus xanthorhynchus* (see below) is already considered to be Critically Endangered. Six species, on the other hand, have been classified at lower threat levels: Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* is now Least Concern (previously Vulnerable), Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri* is Vulnerable and Fuerteventura Stonechat *Saxicola dacotiae* Near Threatened (both previously Endangered). Three species of

Atlantic Island pigeon have benefited from conservation measures on their behalves: Madeira Pigeon *Columba trocaz* and Dark-tailed Laurel Pigeon *C. bollii* become Least Concern (both previously Near Threatened), whilst White-tailed Pigeon *C. junoniae* changes from Endangered to Near Threatened.

Source: [www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/global\\_species\\_programme/whats\\_new.html](http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/global_species_programme/whats_new.html)

### African biofuels a con?

African biofuels destined for Europe will result in up to six times the carbon emissions of fossil fuels, a new study has revealed. The report, commissioned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB; BirdLife in the UK), Action Aid and Nature Kenya (the country's BirdLife Partner), focuses on the Dakatcha Woodlands in Kenya which are set to be replaced by jatropha plantations (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 11). Campaigners say the results of the study make a mockery of claims that biofuels represent a renewable alternative to fossil fuels. Dakatcha is one of the last remaining coastal forests in Kenya and is home to thousands



Southern Banded Snake Eagle /  
Circaète barré *Circaetus fasciolatus*  
(Adam Riley / Rockjumper  
Birding Tours)

of indigenous tribes' people who will be made homeless if the plans go ahead, as well as a range of threatened wildlife. Dr Helen Byron, RSPB's Kenya expert, said: "The Dakatcha Woodlands are a haven for wildlife and the threat they face is a direct result of European demand for biofuels. No government has done a proper assessment of biofuels imported from overseas to see if they will, in fact, reduce our carbon emissions—so we decided to do it for them. We were shocked to discover that the biofuel produced from the proposed plantations at Dakatcha will result in up to six times more carbon emissions than fossil fuels." Taking into account the emissions produced throughout the production process, the study found that jatropha would emit 2.5–6.0 times more greenhouse gases than fossil fuels. Much of the biofuel produced in Dakatcha is destined for Europe because of new EU targets. The Renewable Energy Directive requires 10% of transport to be renewable by 2020 and most member states plan to meet this almost entirely through biofuels, which is likely to result in a doubling of biofuel use in Europe by 2020. A recently commissioned study has demonstrated that extra biofuels will increase greenhouse gas emissions by at least 81% and perhaps as much as 167%. Dakatcha is a global biodiversity hotspot and home to several globally threatened birds including Fischer's Turaco *Tauraco fischeri*, Southern Banded Snake-Eagle *Circaetus fasciolatus*, Sokoke Scops Owl *Otus ireneae* and Sokoke Pipit *Anthus sokokensis*. In particular, Clarke's Weaver *Ploceus golandi* occurs at only two sites on Earth and is threatened with extinction if the plantation goes ahead.

Sources: BirdLife International press release, March 2011; World Birdwatch 33(1), p. 5



### Wintering and migration strategies of a Black Kite revealed by satellite telemetry

An adult male Black Kite that bred in Germany was studied over a period of two years (June 2007–June 2009) using GPS satellite telemetry. Departure on migration was hesitant in both years, picking up speed only in late August when the bird was in southern Germany. However, if the time spent resting in central Germany after leaving the breeding territory is ignored, this Black Kite covered the distance on autumn migration more rapidly (234 km / day and 256 km / day, in 2007 and 2008, respectively) than on its return in spring (215 km / day in spring 2008 vs. 191 km / day in spring 2009). On 30 March it covered the longest recorded daily flight of 663 km, with the highest recorded mean flight speed in the course of a single hour being 89 km over Morocco. The bird reached its wintering area, which in both 2007 and 2008 encompassed a rather large part of West Africa, on 15 September in both years. It divided its wintering into three zones, which it visited consecutively and which were c.1,075 and 780 km apart, respectively. The size of these zones was 54,430–88,403 km<sup>2</sup>, 39,752–48,188 km<sup>2</sup> and 7,955–16,339 km<sup>2</sup>, respectively. The male seldom used the same nocturnal roost on two consecutive nights and the mean distance between consecutive night roosts was 31–42

km. In the boreal winter of 2007 / 08 the kite covered at least 14,000 km within its wintering area, and the authors of the study assumed that prevailing climatic conditions were responsible for movements between the three areas.

Source: Population Ecol. Raptors & Owls 6, pp. 243–284; [www.raptor-research.de/pdfs/a\\_sp100p/a\\_sp152\\_PGE-06-243-284-Meyburg-Schwarzmlan.pdf](http://www.raptor-research.de/pdfs/a_sp100p/a_sp152_PGE-06-243-284-Meyburg-Schwarzmlan.pdf)

### The Lesser Spotted Eagle's migrations

A pair of Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina* in Germany was fitted with satellite transmitters, which recorded four autumn and two spring migrations in their entirety. The pair, which travelled separately, wintered in Zambia (the male), and Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique (the female), c.9,350 and 11,350 km distant from the nesting territory, respectively. The length of time spent on migration varied between 52 and 119 days (mean 81 days). For both birds autumn migration was longer (74–119 days) than spring migration (52–64 days), with the fastest speeds being achieved while crossing the Sahara. For both birds, the greatest daily distance flown was 521 km over northern Sudan, with cross-country speeds reaching a maximum 66.8 km/h.

Source: Population Ecol. Raptors & Owls 6, pp. 63–85; [www.raptor-research.de/pdfs/a\\_sp100p/a\\_sp150\\_PGE-06-063-085-Meyburg-Schreiadler.pdf](http://www.raptor-research.de/pdfs/a_sp100p/a_sp150_PGE-06-063-085-Meyburg-Schreiadler.pdf)

### Great Snipe is the fastest migratory bird

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* could well be the fastest bird on Earth over long distances. After following the migration south from Sweden to central Africa of three birds equipped with geolocators—tiny tracking devices weighing just 1.1 g—Swedish scientist Raymond Klaassen and his colleagues found that one bird flew 4,619 km non-stop in just two days at an astonishing mean speed of 96 km / h. The second bird flew 6,169 km in three days, and the third 6,800

km in 3.5 days. “We know of no other animal that travels this rapidly over such a long distance”, write the authors in their report. What is also unusual is that the migration route takes the snipes over habitats that would be perfect stopovers, where they could rest and refuel, but they don't make use of these. The study thus demonstrates that some migratory birds are prepared to accept extreme costs of strenuous exercise and large fuel loads, even when stopover sites are available and there is little tailwind assistance.

Source: Biol. Lett. 25 May 2011, doi:10.1098/rsbl.2011.0343

### Drongo uses both its own and other species' alarm calls to steal food

Tom Flower of the Zoology Department in Cambridge, UK, has shown that wild Fork-tailed Drongos *Dicrurus adsimilis* make both drongo-specific alarm-calls and mimic the alarm-calls of a target species when watching the latter with food that the drongo wants. The result is that the targets abandon the food enabling the drongo to steal it. Flower found that the calls are indistinguishable (structurally) from the ‘correct’ calls, and via playback experiments was able to show that at least Meerkats *Suricata suricatta* and Pied Babblers



Black Kite / Milan noir *Milvus migrans*  
(Georges Olivos)



Fork-tailed Drongo / Drongo brilliant  
*Dicrurus adsimilis* (Warwick Tarboton)



*Turdoides bicolor* were deceived by both.

Source: Proc. Roy. Soc. Lond. B 278, pp. 1548–1555

## North Africa

### 'New' wolf

As long ago as 1880 Thomas Huxley commented that members of the Egyptian form of Golden Jackal *Canis aureus lupaster* looked suspiciously like Grey Wolves *C. lupus*. The same observation was made by several 20th century biologists studying skulls. Now, a new study, involving scientists from the University of Oslo, Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit and Addis Ababa University, has uncovered genetic evidence that unambiguously places the Egyptian jackals within the Grey Wolf species complex. It is not a jackal, but a wolf. Dr Eli Rueñess, the first author of the paper, states that "We could hardly believe our own eyes when we found wolf DNA that did not match anything in GenBank." It transpires that the colonisation of Africa by the ancestral stock of Grey Wolves took place c.3 million years ago and is today embodied by the animal hitherto called the Egyptian jackal. Prof. Claudio Sillero added "Ethiopian Wolves *C. simensis* split off from the Grey Wolf complex even earlier than the newly discovered African wolf." The team also found genetically very similar specimens 2,500 km from Egypt, in the highlands of Ethiopia. Golden Jackals are regarded by the IUCN as Least Concern, but the newly discovered African Wolf may be much rarer. Certainly, it is a priority for both conservation and science to discover its whereabouts and numbers. Prof. David Macdonald, an author of the paper, remarked that "A wolf in Africa is not only important conservation news, but raises fascinating biological questions about how the new African Wolf evolved and lived alongside not only the real Golden Jackals but also the vanishingly rare Ethiopian Wolf, which is a very different species with

which the new discovery should not be confused."

Source: <http://www.wildlifeextra.com/gol/news/egyptian-wolf.html#cr>

### Proposed World Heritage Site in Egypt threatened by development

The Amer Group, the Egyptian real estate developer responsible for the massive Porto Marina and Porto Sokhna tourism developments on Egypt's coasts, plans to build Porto Fayoum on 263 ha in the Lake Qarun Protected area near Fayoum Oasis. This is the first development of such proportions to be permitted in an Egyptian protected area. This and other tourism developments planned for a 10-km stretch of the northern part of Lake Qarun will undoubtedly wreak untold damage to a pristine desert area, which contains one of the world's most complete fossil records of terrestrial primates and marshland mammals, and remains critical to our understanding of mammalian evolution. In 2010 excavations revealed the complete fossil remains of a prehistoric whale new to science. The area has been listed as a proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site, not only for its priceless fossil deposits, but also its prehistoric and archaeological treasures, including Pharaonic tombs and quarries, and the world's most ancient paved road.

Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE) considers that the tourism development will negatively impact birds and their habitats at Lake Qarun, which is an Important Bird Area (IBA). Through the Jensen Foundation, BirdLife supported NCE to establish a Site Support Group (SSG) to protect the site as well as generate incomes sustainably. Egypt's official Tourism Development Authority (TDA) has participated in numerous studies highlighting Lake Qarun's importance for ecotourism, yet it has approved the project to promote more conventional tourism at the lake, despite opposition from officials at the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs responsible for managing Egypt's protected areas. NCE is calling for the area to be declared Egypt's first UNESCO

Geopark to attract tourists, create jobs and as a step towards making the area a World Heritage Site. Through its SSG network in Egypt, NEC hopes that the 'Friends of Lake Qarun' SSG will also participate in the project recently funded by the US Embassy's Democracy Grants Programme. For more information concerning the proposed development contact [info@ncegypt.org](mailto:info@ncegypt.org) (Nature Conservation Egypt).

Source: BirdLife International press release, May 2011



Kurrichane Buttonquail / Turnix d'Andalousie *Turnix sylvaticus*  
(Adam Kennedy)

### Status of Kurrichane Buttonquail

A recent review of the history, status and distribution of the nominate race of Kurrichane Buttonquail *Turnix sylvaticus* in the Western Palearctic contains a valuable update to our knowledge of the species' status in Morocco. The article features a number of photographs of both the birds and the buttonquail's habitat in the Doukkala region of north-west Morocco.

Source: Dutch Birding 33, pp. 75–93

### Ashy-headed Wagtail breeding in south-west Morocco

Arnoud van den Berg has described the recent surprise discovery of a breeding population of Ashy-headed Wagtails *Motacilla flava cinereocapilla* in south-west Morocco, e.g. around Oued Massa, which has been documented with both photographs and sound-recordings. The nearest known breeding areas for this taxon are on Sardinia and Sicily, and there



are very few previous records of it in Morocco, but Spanish Wagtail *M. f. iberiae* does breed in Morocco, and van den Berg found evidence of hybridisation between *cinereocapilla* and *iberiae*.

Source: Dutch Birding 33, pp. 117–121



Bruce's Green Pigeon / Colombar waalia *Treron waalia* (Jason Anderson)

### First Bruce's Green Pigeon in Egypt

A Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia*, photographed at Luxor in early January 2011, provides the latest addition to the Egyptian bird list, and is also the first record for the Western Palearctic.

Source: Dutch Birding 33, pp. 121–122

## Atlantic Ocean Islands

### Azores Bullfinch should be downlisted

Currently listed as Critically Endangered, Azores Bullfinch *Pyrrhula murina* is endemic to the island of São Miguel in the Azores, and is considered to have an extremely small and declining population. In order to carry out a complete assessment of the species' conservation status, Ricardo Ceia *et al.* attempted to calculate its population trend based on annual monitoring data from the period 1991–2008, as well as the species' current population and range size. Contrary to previous inferences, Azores Bullfinch appears to be no

longer decreasing, although the quality of its laurel forest habitat continues to decline due to the persistent threat of invasive species. Its population is currently estimated at  $1,064 \pm 304$  individuals and the species' range size variously at 144 km<sup>2</sup> (extent of occurrence) and 83 km<sup>2</sup> (area of occupancy) respectively. As result, the authors of the study have proposed that Azores Bullfinch be downlisted to Endangered.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. doi:10.1017/S0959270911000025

### Canary Islands Stonechat population higher than previously thought

During a comprehensive survey of Canary Islands Stonechat *Saxicola dacotiae*, undertaken in 2005–06, 490 adult individuals were recorded. The birds preferred high, steep terrain, although the lower and flatter areas that comprise most of Fuerteventura were also occupied, albeit at lower densities. The extrapolated estimate considered most reliable arrives at a total population of c.14,000 individuals, which is much higher than previous estimates. Discrepancies appear to be due to different methodologies used and the lack of sampling in extensive areas of low bird density, although a genuine increase in population during the last three decades cannot be excluded.

Source: Ardeola 57, pp. 387–405

### Scavenging raptors in the Cape Verde Islands are in trouble

A study on the Cape Verde Islands by Sabine Hille and Nigel Collar has found that scavenging raptors (two kites and a vulture) have experienced steeper declines and more local extinctions than non-scavengers (Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* and two falcons), with the partial scavenger (a buzzard) midway between the two groups. Specific causes of the declines have been identified to include incidental poisoning, direct persecution and declines in the availability of carcasses and other detritus. These findings, which highlight specifically the conservation importance of the island of Santo

Antão, indicate the priority that needs to be accorded to scavengers, and this general principle can be applied to many other places in both Europe and Africa. In Europe at least many insular populations are reaching unsustainable levels.

Source: Oryx 45, pp. 217–224

### Recent surveys source of some optimism for Northern Rockhopper Penguin...

Approximately 80% of the world population of the globally Endangered Northern Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes moseleyi* breed at Tristan da Cunha and Gough Island, where its populations appeared to be declining. In 2009, all four islands in the Tristan da Cunha group (Tristan, Inaccessible, Nightingale and Middle) were surveyed, with estimated breeding totals as follows: Tristan 6,700 pairs, Inaccessible 54,000 pairs, Nightingale 25,000 pairs and 83,000 pairs on Middle Island. The counts confirm that Tristan da Cunha holds over 65% of the world population and suggest that numbers have been relatively stable for 30 years.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. doi:10.1017/S0959270911000013

### ...but then disaster struck!

In late March 2011 a cargo vessel, the *MS Oliva*, became wrecked on Nightingale Island, threatening the ecosystem, not only through leaking fuel, but also the risk of any rats on the vessel colonising the island. Oil quickly surrounded Nightingale and extended into a slick several kilometres offshore from the wreck, and hundreds of oiled Northern Rockhopper Penguins *Eudyptes moseleyi* were soon coming ashore. The Tristan Conservation Department rapidly deployed nine people and placed baited rodent traps onshore in the vicinity of the grounded bulk carrier, while a salvage tug was rapidly despatched from Cape Town. By the end of April, there was still no evidence of rat infestation and the clean-up operation on the island's beaches, as well as of some affected areas on Middle and Alex islands, was



in full swing, although many parts of the coasts of these islands, and the shoreline of Inaccessible Island, had not yet been visited. It was feared that at least 10,000 penguins might have been affected, with several thousand individuals having been treated, many successfully, on neighbouring Tristan da Cunha. However, the full impact of the spill on the population will not become apparent until the birds return to their breeding islands in August. At the time of writing, in late May, there were still hundreds of penguins being cleaned and rehabilitated. For updates visit the Tristan Association website: [www.tristandc.com/newsmsoliva.php](http://www.tristandc.com/newsmsoliva.php).

Sources: *BirdLife International press releases, March and April 2011*; [www.tristandc.com/newsmsoliva.php](http://www.tristandc.com/newsmsoliva.php)

## West and Central Africa

### A Black Guillemot off Senegal

Four French observers recorded what was apparently Africa's first Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle* off Cap Vert, near Dakar, Senegal, in mid-October 2008. Unfortunately, the description of this unprecedented observation (the southernmost ever of the species) is somewhat basic, and no photographs were obtained, although the bird was seen ten times over a two-day period. The same observers also recorded the seventh Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* and third Laughing Gull *L. atricilla* in Senegal (erroneously stated to be the second).

Source: *Dutch Birding* 33, pp. 43–44

### Black-necked Grebe new to The Gambia

A record of a Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, photographed at Kotu Sewage Farm, Kombo, St. Mary Division in coastal Gambia, in November 1989, has only recently come to light. The record, of an adult in winter plumage, is documented in the latest issue of *Malimbus* and constitutes the first and only known observation to date of this species in The Gambia.

Source: *Malimbus* 33, pp. 55–57

### New threat to Dwarf Olive Ibis

Reports from BirdLife Species Guardians on São Tomé, in the Gulf of Guinea, indicate that hunting is increasing and includes the Critically Endangered Dwarf Olive Ibis *Bostrychia bocagei*. A group of hunters on Monte Carmo were found with more than 90 São Tomé Green Pigeons *Treron sanctithomae* and at least one Dwarf Olive Ibis on 26 April 2011. The hunters had gained access through estate land under an Agripalma concession to foreign and São Tomé investors, and intended for oil palm plantations. The Agripalma concession lies adjacent to the Monte Carmo forests of Obô Natural Park and overlaps with the natural park's buffer zone. BirdLife has previously expressed concerns that the development of the oil palm plantation would have significant adverse impacts on forest biodiversity. Among the many impacts cited was an increased threat of hunting of threatened species owing to clearance of secondary forest that would lower bushmeat availability to local people.

"We are extremely worried that the increasing hunting pressure and habitat destruction may already be driving the Dwarf Olive Ibis closer to extinction than ever before," said Dr Julius Arinaitwe, the BirdLife Regional Director. "One likely approach to reducing the hunting pressure could be promoting access to cheaper alternative sources of animal protein hand-in-hand with making the local people realise other values of the species, including ecotourism benefits."

Source: *BirdLife International press release, May 2011*

### Avifauna of the Lesio-Louna and Lefini Reserves, Republic of Congo, summarised

In a recent paper, Tony King summarises all known information concerning the birds of the Lesio-Louna and Lefini Reserves, two sites on the Batéké Plateau in Congo-Brazzaville. The plateau is an area of rolling savanna and forest patches extending from south-east Gabon

into Congo-Kinshasa and harbours a uniquely diverse avifauna. The total number of species known from the two reserves now stands at 317, including 74 Guineo-Congolian and five Zambezian biome species. This reinforces the categorisation of the Batéké Plateau as the northern limit of the Guinea-Congolian / Zambezian transition zone. One subspecies is new to Congo-Brazzaville: the intra-African migrant Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx pictus natalensis*, which occurs sympatrically with a resident subspecies.

Source: *Malimbus* 33, pp. 1–41

### House Sparrow reaches Burundi

Having been reported for the first time from Rwanda in 2008, the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* has now reached neighbouring Burundi. In 2009, the species was found at three sites: in a village in the Rusizi plains, north-east Burundi (three pairs), at Mpanda, Bubanza Province (one pair), and at Bujumbura (c.10 individuals).

Source: *Malimbus* 33, pp. 57–58

### Should Swierstra's Francolin be uplisted to Endangered?

Michael Mills and his colleagues have highlighted the importance of Mount Moco to bird conservation, especially within the context of Afromontane forests. Of the 64 endemic / near-endemic taxa associated with the highlands of western Angola, all of the 19 forest-dependent taxa are known from Mount Moco. However, Swierstra's Francolin *Pternistis swierstrai* is the only threatened endemic. During a visit in 2009, ten of 30 forest patches at Mount Moco larger than 0.5 ha were surveyed. The species was found in seven of these patches, leading the team to estimate a minimum of 75 pairs of Swierstra's Francolin on Mount Moco, and therefore 185–420 pairs globally. Based on these results, the authors of the survey recommend that the francolin be uplisted from Vulnerable to Endangered. Furthermore, remaining forest cover on Moco is being eroded by bush fires, removal of wood for construction material and clearance for subsistence



agriculture. To preserve the forest, Mills *et al.* have proposed the implementation of a well-defined protected area. For more information on Mount Moco see *Bull. ABC* 17: 18, and [www.mountmoco.org](http://www.mountmoco.org).

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. 21, pp. 119–133

### Some Black Storks need stopover places in Europe and the Sahara

D. Chevalier and colleagues from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in France used satellite tracking of Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* to discover their use of stopover sites on migration from the breeding grounds in Western Europe to wintering areas in West Africa, and during their return in the northern spring. Some individuals do not stop at all while others use up to five places. Most such stopover sites were in Spain, but several were in Morocco and Mauretania, and most were quite close to protected areas. However, individuals were not consistent either as to whether or where they stopped, necessitating a network of potentially suitable sites. A separate paper by Frédéric Jiguet and colleagues, also from the CNRS, has modelled the West African wintering range of the species based on its ecological requirements, which

data can be used for conservation planning on the species' behalf.

Source: J. Ornithol. 152, pp. 1–13; 111–118

## East Africa

### Serengeti Highway

In 2010, Tanzania's government announced extremely controversial plans for a 53-km commercial highway to run east to west through the Serengeti, Tanzania's oldest national park and a UNESCO World Heritage site. The announcement caused worldwide concern, with catastrophic consequences forecast such as a collapse of the world's last terrestrial mass migration (of Blue Wildebeest *Connochaetes taurinus*), as well as its supported ecosystems. An obvious solution and only viable option as seen by many of the world's scientists is for a new route bypassing the Serengeti altogether. A bypass proposal could now be included in the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). With the project in the lending pipeline, the World Bank is willing to work with the government of Tanzania on an alternative southern route. NABU International (BirdLife Partner in Germany) supports an anti-poaching project in the northern extension of the Serengeti, Kenya's Maasai Mara, and is also an official partner in a new film, *Serengeti*. The Vice President of NABU, Thomas Tennhardt, welcomed the news. "This solution would not only spare the Serengeti, but benefit a far greater number of rural people in a densely populated area adjacent to the Serengeti by connecting them to commercial centres and road networks." The alternative southern route should avoid the Serengeti, as well as the land of the last 400 Hadza, Africa's last true hunter-gatherers. NABU also supports an online petition requesting the Tanzanian government to bypass the Serengeti, which can be signed at <https://www.change.org/petitions/justice-for-tanzania-means-no-serengeti-highway>. Just before we went to press, it was announced

that the Tanzanian government had decided to withdraw its original proposal.

Source: BirdLife International press releases, February 2011 and July 2011

### Grauer's Swamp Warbler mist-netted at Kibira National Park, Burundi

The Endangered Grauer's Swamp Warbler *Bradypterus graueri* is restricted to swamps in Burundi, Rwanda and eastern Congo-Brazzaville. Recently, a bird was mist-netted at a swamp in Kibira National Park, Burundi, known as Mwokora, during field work as part of the BirdLife International / MacArthur Foundation project 'Implementing and monitoring an Adaptive Management Framework for Climate Change in the Albertine Rift' implemented locally by ABO (BirdLife partner in Burundi). The bird was caught on 25 January 2011, and ABO staff estimated the local population to be 30 singing individuals. In 1984 the entire Burundi population was estimated at just ten pairs. The species currently faces many threats as its habitat is under pressure from the surrounding community harvesting raw materials for mats or for thatching. At other suitable swamps in the park, agriculture is now seriously jeopardising habitat for the species. Urgent conservation measures—targeting valley swamps—are needed.

Source: BirdLife International press release, February 2011

### Last chance to prevent Africa's first recorded bird extinction?

Liben Lark *Heteromirafrida sidamoensis*, with a population of possibly fewer than 100 birds, has been widely tipped to become mainland Africa's first recorded bird extinction, unless urgent action is taken to prevent its demise (see *Bull. ABC* 17: 155). Classified as Critically Endangered, the lark has now been thrown a lifeline thanks to funds raised by the British Birdwatching Fair held at Rutland Water in August 2010. The organisers Martin Davies and Tim Appleton presented



Black Stork / Cigogne noire *Ciconia nigra* (Warwick Tarboton)



a UK£242,000 cheque to Dr Marco Lambertini, BirdLife International's Chief Executive at a special reception hosted by His Excellency Berhanu Kebede, Ethiopia's UK Ambassador, at the Ethiopian Embassy in London. The funds will be used by the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, the BirdLife Partner in country, to work with local communities to reduce the impact of over-grazing by livestock and prevent conversion of the land to arable farming. Helping the grasslands recover will benefit both the lark and the pastoralists living there. Martin Davies said: "Ethiopia has a remarkable natural heritage and is hugely rich in species found nowhere else in the world. Over 840 species of bird have been recorded in Ethiopia, 17 of which are unique to this country and 29 others nearly so. Unfortunately, this wonderful wildlife is under increasing threat and we hope that the proceeds from this year's event will help the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society and BirdLife International to take the urgent steps needed to secure the future of this country's unique birds." Ethiopia's UK Ambassador, His Excellency Berhanu Kebede, said: "Ethiopia's biodiversity resources are under critical threat. Growing human and livestock populations pose the single most serious problem, resulting in deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, and desertification. To reverse the situation, the government of Ethiopia has promulgated laws and put in place the appropriate institutions. Significant achievements have been made in restoring the fauna and flora of the country; hence the percentage of land covered by forests has grown from three to nine per cent within five years." Among other species set to benefit from the Birdfair's proceeds are Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 11), Ethiopian Bush Crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* and White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis*.

Source: BirdLife International press release, March 2011

### Soda ash plant to go ahead despite opposition

Tanzania's National Development Corporation (NDC) in partnership with Tata Chemicals of India is to proceed with its multi-million dollar soda ash plant at the fragile Ramsar site of Lake Natron despite opposition from conservationists. Since 2007 green activists have been campaigning to stop Tanzania's plan, which they say threatens East Africa's only significant breeding site for Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor*, thereby putting at risk 75% of the global population. Cyril Chami, the Minister for Industry and Trade, has said that plans to construct the factory are at an advanced stage, but the government was still waiting for the feasibility study, but that if necessary the government will seek an alternative to ensure the factory is built. President Jakaya Kikwete is also arguing that the plant will boost the economy. He claimed that experience from elsewhere shows that excavation can be done without harming the ecosystem. "What matters is the application of environmental-friendly technology to avoid disrupting flamingo breeding sites. Sometimes I doubt whether those who are opposing the plant are really patriotic, because it seems as if they are agents of some people we don't know," he said. However, President Kikwete wants the NDC to build the factory away from the lake to avoid the noise and pollution that could disturb the birds' breeding grounds, and use pipes to tap the soda ash and transport it to the plant. In contrast, Arpakwa O'LeSikorei a wildlife and community conservation specialist who has worked on several projects around Lake Natron since 2009 warns that any attempt to build a soda ash plant will cause the flamingos to abandon the area. Tanzania could learn lessons from the Kenyan experience. "Soda ash mining has been going on at Lake Magadi for over 100 years and flamingos have not attempted to breed there over the last 50 years" said Mr Paul Matiku, the Executive Director of NatureKenya. "Soda ash

mining at Lake Magadi has left local communities disillusioned with little to show for the 100 years of mining. The environment has been damaged and fresh water nearly depleted". He said that in 2003, scores of local Maasai were injured by police as they protested against a controversial land lease renewal in favour of Magadi Soda Company.

Sources: <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/-/2560/1149964/-/bttvmcz/-/index.html>; BirdLife International press release, April 2011

### Eucalypt plantations are not all bad

The original forest of the East Usambaras has been much reduced by human activities, in some cases by replacing indigenous trees with introduced *Eucalyptus* plantations. Jasson John and Jonathan Kabigumila of Dar-es-Salaam University examined bird populations in both natural forest and plantations using timed species counts. From 240 counts, 63 forest species were recorded in natural areas and 41 in eucalyptus plantations, with four forest species found exclusively in plantations. There was some seasonal variation, but overall the study revealed that if the plantations were managed responsibly, in particular by retaining some undergrowth and some isolated forest trees, then eucalyptus plantations are not all bad news.

Source: Ostrich 82, pp. 27–37

### Indian Ocean Islands

#### Trucks and timber seized after Asity Madagascar intervenes

In a joint operation with police, local communities and forestry officials, Asity Madagascar (the country's BirdLife partner) has struck a blow against illegal loggers in the Tsitongambarika forest Important Bird Area in the far south-east of the island. Several trucks loaded with rosewood logs were seized. Evidence of the extent of illegal logging was provided by local communities, with whom Asity Madagascar has been working to develop sustainable



forest use. Asity Madagascar has trained local people to monitor the state of the forest, and provides incentives such as investment in developments chosen by the villagers (e.g., schools or improved water supplies) and goods such as fertilisers, when monitoring (independently verified) demonstrates successful forest conservation. More than 800 rosewood planks and 100 logs were recovered during the operation. Asity Madagascar praised the prompt action, which followed a series of workshops organised by BirdLife to increase awareness of the social, economic and environmental damage caused by illegal logging.

Tsitongambarika is the largest remaining area of lowland rainforest in southern Madagascar, and home to many avian endemics, several of which are globally threatened. After years of work by Asity Madagascar, Tsitongambarika has been granted temporary protected status, which is expected to become permanent within the next two years. "The success of this action demonstrates that, given appropriate support and incentives that enable them to see themselves as joint beneficiaries of protected areas, local communities can be highly effective in working with conservation organisations and government authorities to police violations of environmental law", remarked Dr Roger Safford, Senior Programme Manager at BirdLife International.

Source: BirdLife International press release, April 2011

### Relationships in *Pterodroma* petrels obscured

The enigmatic relationships between petrels from Round Island, near Mauritius, and their closest relatives were investigated by Ruth Brown and co-workers using evidence from mtDNA sequence data and ectoparasites. Their results reveal that the most common species on the island, Trindade Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*, appears to be hybridising with two rarer species, Herald Petrel *P. heraldica* and Kermadec Petrel *P. neglecta*. Herald and Kermadec Petrels breed

sympatrically in the Pacific Ocean, where Trindade Petrel is absent, but no record of hybridisation between these two exists and they remain phenotypically distinct. The breakdown of species boundaries in Round Island petrels followed deforestation and changes in species composition due to hunting within their overlapping ranges. The authors of the study state that such multi-species interactions have implications not only for conservation, but also for our understanding of the processes of evolutionary diversification and speciation.

Source: PLoS ONE 10.1371/journal.pone.0020350, 31 May 2011

## Southern Africa

### Logging halted at Mutulanganga IBA

Following a long campaign, commercial logging in Mutulanganga Important Bird Area (IBA) in Zambia has ceased through community pressure with the help of the Zambian Ornithological Society (ZOS; the BirdLife partner). Mutulanganga IBA is a Local Forest Reserve in southern Zambia with a sizeable area of mopane woodland. The forest protects the headwaters of the Mutulanganga, Bendele and Lusitu rivers, which flow into the Zambezi, and in so doing acts as protection from the severe impacts of flash floods and gully erosion on agricultural land and surrounding villages. The IBA was designated on

the basis of its globally threatened and biome-restricted species. Among birds found there are African Pitta *Pitta angolensis*, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx montanus*, Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens*, Crested Guineafowl *Guttera pucherani*, Purple-crested Turaco *Tauraco porphyreolophus*, African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis* and Livingstone's Flycatcher *Erythrocerus livingstonei*. It is also an important area for large mammals. In April 2010 the Fly Dragon Wood and Lumber Company was awarded a timber logging concession in Mutulanganga IBA on condition that the Environmental Project Brief (EPB) was approved. The company submitted an EPB to the Environmental Council of Zambia (ECZ), and ZOS, who has been implementing a community-based ecotourism and biodiversity conservation project in the region, immediately lodged an objection. A full Environmental Impact Assessment was eventually ordered, which was rejected by the Environmental Council in mid-January 2011, with the result that the lumber company has been prevented from logging Mutulanganga, although the option remains to them to lodge an appeal in the high court. Fortunately, this is both costly and considered to be otherwise unlikely because of the very strong case mounted by the ZOS.

Source: World Birdwatch 33, p. 2

### Threatened warbler does well in 'transformed' habitat

The threatened Knysna Warbler *Bradypterus sylvaticus* has declined sharply on the Cape Peninsula over the last 20 years and is becoming confined to, but is surviving very well in, narrow belts of suburban riverine woodland, rather than the remaining natural forested patches. James Pryke and colleagues from Stellenbosch University examined potential food supplies in both habitats and found that, although there was a greater overall abundance of potential prey in the suburban areas, the preferred prey was equally common in both.



African Pitta / Brève de l'Angola  
*Pitta angolensis* (Warwick Tarboton)



Hence reduced food supply is not the cause of the species abandoning natural forest patches. This represents an unusual case of a localised and threatened bird species faring better under transformed conditions than in natural habitats.

Source: Afr. J. Ecol. 49, pp 199–208

## Taxonomic proposals

### A new species of rail in Madagascar

In the light of two new specimens, Steve Goodman and his colleagues examined morphological and molecular genetic differentiation in the forest-dwelling Madagascar Wood Rail *Mentocrex* (*Canirallus*) *kioloides* complex of Madagascar. Two subspecies are generally recognised: *M. k. kioloides*, which occurs in the island's humid central and eastern forests; and *M. k. berliozii*, which occurs in the transitional dry deciduous humid forests of the north-west. The new specimens, from a limestone karstic area in the lowlands (below c.300 m) of the central west, exhibit notably different size and plumage coloration, as well as being genetically divergent, from either subspecies of *M. kioloides*. As a result, Goodman *et al.* have named Tsingy Wood Rail *Mentocrex beankaensis* as a species new to science restricted to the Bemaraha and Beanka massifs. The species' unusual vernacular name is taken from the Malagasy word for the rock pinnacles that characterise its range.

Source: Zootaxa 2776, pp. 49–60

### Streaked Scrub Warbler is not a cisticolid

Streaked Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta*, which inhabits arid areas of North Africa to western Asia, has long been thought to be closely related to the cisticolid warblers. However, Per Alström and his colleagues analysed two mitochondrial and four nuclear genes from this species, and found that Streaked Scrub Warbler is sister to the mainly Asian Cettiidae (bush warblers, tesias, etc.). Superficial morphological similarity to cisticolid



Streaked Scrub Warbler / Dromoïque vif-argent *Scotocerca inquieta* (Jon Hornbuckle)

warblers has previously clouded the species true relationships. Detailed morphology, such as facial bristles and claw and footpad structure, also supports a closer relationship to Cettiidae and some other non-cisticolid warblers.

Source: Ibis 153, pp. 87–97

### More than one species of Tiny Greenbul?

Tiny Greenbul *Phyllastrephus debilis* is the only bird species within the Eastern Arc Mountains / coastal forest mosaic known to be polytypic across an altitudinal gradient: *P. d. albigula* (which has a green head) is found in the Usambara and Nguru Mountains, whereas *P. d. rabai* (grey-headed) occurs in Tanzanian lowland and foothill forests. Using a combination of morphological and genetic data, Jerome Fuchs and his colleagues aimed to establish if this pattern of morphological differentiation is the result of disruptive selection along an altitudinal gradient or a consequence of secondary contact following population expansion of two differentiated lineages. They found significant biometric differences between lowland *rabai* and montane *albigula* in Tanzania, which are coupled with discrete differences in underparts coloration, and that lowland and montane birds form two distinct genetic lineages, with only limited gene flow at three mid-altitude localities. The extent of this

introgression appears to be limited and is probably a consequence of the recent expansion of *rabai* further inland. As a result, the Fuchs team has recommended that *albigula* be elevated to species rank.

Source: BMC Evol. Biol.

doi:10.1186/1471-2148-11-117

### The black boubous of coastal East Africa

Don Turner and his colleagues have drawn attention to an interesting taxonomic and nomenclatural problem represented by the all-black boubous (*Laniarius* spp.) of coastal East Africa, in Kenya and southern Somalia. These birds have traditionally been viewed as black morphs of Tropical Boubou *L. aethiopicus sublacteus* and *L. a. erlangeri*. However, recent sound-recordings and observations of these birds by Brian Finch and Nigel Hunter have suggested that these all-black populations are vocally and behaviourally distinct from other populations of Tropical Boubou, and therefore merit taxonomic reinterpretation, especially using genetic methods. The authors also point out, if these black boubous are deemed worthy of separate taxonomic status, then the name *L. nigerrimus* would have priority, because their describer, Reichenow, named the all-black population in the Tana Delta thus, whilst the all-black birds in southern Somalia were originally named by the same author *L. erlangeri*. The typical black-and-white boubous in the latter region were also named by Reichenow, in this case *L. aethiopicus somaliensis*.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 131, pp. 125–128

### 'Gulf of Guinea Thrush' is two species

The relationships of the thrushes on São Tomé and Príncipe (in the Gulf of Guinea) are uncertain, although they are usually considered to represent separate races of the same species *Turdus olivaceofuscus*. Most recently, Martim Melo (now at the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute in Cape Town) and several colleagues





Gulf of Guinea Thrush / Merle de São Tomé *Turdus o. olivaceofuscus* (Adam Riley / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

have studied the Príncipe form more extensively than previously, including its song and calls, as well as trapping some individuals to acquire samples for genetic analyses. They found that the birds on the two islands differ substantially in size, bill shape and several plumage characters, whilst the Príncipe form has one call type not previously noted from any *Turdus* species. The authors conclude that the two forms are independent lineages (almost certainly from African Thrush *T. olivaceus*) and should therefore be considered

separate species: *T. olivaceofuscus* for the form on São Tomé and *T. xanthorhynchus* for that on Príncipe. They also note that the Príncipe taxon is very rare and restricted to the most inaccessible parts of the island (see also p. 138).

Source: J. Zool. 282, pp. 120–129

### Internet resources

#### Moroccan birds

Anyone interested in the birds of Morocco should consult <http://moroccanbirds.webs.com>. The site contains links to PDFs of peer-reviewed papers, popular articles and unpublished reports, and also to blogs containing a wealth of photographs. It also includes a bibliography on the interesting Smir wetland, in northern Morocco, which is presently being destroyed.

#### Birds of Fuerteventura

A new blog on birds from the Canary Islands, dedicated entirely to the birds of Fuerteventura can be found at <http://fuerteventurabirds.blogspot.com/>

Contributed by Rubén Barone Tosco

### Zoological Bibliography

*Zoological Bibliography* or *Opera Zoologica* is a new quarterly journal that can be downloaded free. The first issue was published in November 2010, and the most recent, No. 3, in May 2011. The journal features articles reporting on investigations into the bibliography of zoology chiefly relating to the dating of publications and to authorship, and is dedicated to two pioneers in this field, Charles Davies Sherborn (1861–1942) and Charles Wallace Richmond (1868–1932).

Contributed by Edward Dickinson

### The birds of Libya

A book in English on the birds of Libya with an annotated checklist is in active preparation. Ornithologists are invited to send their unpublished records to Paul Isenmann, CEFÉ/CNRS, 1919 route de Mende, F-34293 Montpellier Cedex 5, France; e-mail: [paul.isenmann@cefe.cnrs.fr](mailto:paul.isenmann@cefe.cnrs.fr); or Jens Hering, Wolkenburger Straße 11, D-09212 Limbach-Oberfrohna, Germany; e-mail: [jenshering.vso-bibliothek@t-online.de](mailto:jenshering.vso-bibliothek@t-online.de)

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# The avifauna of Benin: additions and corrections

Robert J. Dowsett and Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

**L'avifaune du Bénin : additions et corrections.** Depuis la publication de la liste des oiseaux du Bénin par Dowsett (1993), 58 espèces ont été ajoutées à l'avifaune du pays dans diverses publications. Cet article présente 74 espèces de plus nouvelles pour le pays et confirme le statut de quelques autres incluses par Dowsett (1993), mais pour lesquelles il manquait une localité ou des détails convaincants. Par la même occasion, nous rejetons 28 espèces qui nous paraissent improbables ou mal identifiées, et présentons une liste de 28 autres espèces dont la présence au Bénin est probable mais nécessite confirmation—en particulier, les espèces notées dans un parc trans-frontalier mais sans préciser de quel côté de la frontière elles ont été vues, et d'autres pour lesquelles nous manquons de détails convaincants. Nous acceptons maintenant un total de 542 espèces pour le pays.

**Summary.** Since the list of the birds of Benin was published by Dowsett (1993), 58 species have been added to the country's avifauna in various publications. This paper presents another 74 species that are new and confirms some others included in Dowsett (1993) but which lacked a locality or supporting details. We also discuss 28 species that we believe have been claimed erroneously, and we list 28 that we consider require confirmation—in particular species listed from a transfrontier park, but not clearly credited to Benin, and others for which convincing details are not available. We now accept a total of 542 species for Benin.

**B**enin (formerly Dahomey) has received little attention in the ornithological literature, and the only annotated list purporting to include all bird species known from the country is that by Dowsett (1993). Since then, a number of species have been added to the national list, in a series of articles (summarised below), but many remain undocumented. Some 20 species were added during a visit by us of six weeks (in January–February 2009) to the transition zone forests of the south, with a few days further north in the Forêt Classée de Ouari Maro, near Bétérou, and two weeks (February 2010) in the two northern national parks, Pendjari and 'W'. Among resident birdwatchers, mention must be made in particular of P. M. Claffey who lived in the Bétérou area (Borgou Province) in 1987–99, and visited Cotonou for a total of ten months in 2001–02. Several observers will be continuing field work in the country, making it premature to discuss in detail species' distributions. This paper is an initial attempt to bring the Benin list up to date.

Three publications deal with two transfrontier national parks, Pendjari-Arly and 'W' du Niger (e.g. Green & Sayer 1979, Crisler *et al.* 2003, Balança *et al.* 2007), but it is not clear which species are recorded from the Benin side. As regards the Pendjari, we do not know which species in the list presented by Delvingt *et al.* (1989) were observed by those authors, or were

merely repeated from Green & Sayer (1979). The list for Arly-Pendjari in Balança *et al.* (2007) includes records from an unpublished report (Grell *et al.* 2005: G. Balança pers. comm.), but there are a number of improbable species there for which we have been unable to obtain details. Many of the species accepted for Benin by Dowsett (1993) on the basis of Green & Sayer (1979) have since been confirmed, and those that have not are listed below in a section on species requiring confirmation:

We exclude mention here of species mapped in the standard literature as apparently occurring in Benin (e.g. Borrow & Demey 2001, 2004, Fry & Keith 2004 and earlier volumes), if no locality has appeared in print, or anonymous reports (e.g. in Dodman & Taylor 1996 and others of the series). We have taken into account all published records we know of, and any not referred to here should be assumed to be unaccepted.

Initials of observers: B. Boedts (BB), R. A. Cheke (RAC), P. M. Claffey (PMC), M. Cocker (MC), C. de Vaan (CdV), R. J. Dowsett (RJD), F. Dowsett-Lemaire (FDL), S. Feys (SF), A. Fossé (AF), A. Giannotti (AG), A. A. Green (AAG), J. Gonin (JG), J. Goossens (JGoo), M. Langeveld (ML), J. & S. Merz (J&SM), W. Plomp (WP), B. Portier (BP), I. van Woersem (IvW) and J. F. Walsh (JFW). Observations by FDL and RJD together are designated by pers. obs. All



photographs mentioned have been examined by us, and are archived in the *Tauraco* databases (to be deposited eventually at the Edward Grey Institute, University of Oxford). Copies of tape-recordings by FDL have been deposited at the British Library in London. Some of these observations have appeared in *Bull. ABC's* Recent Reports.

### Additions to the avifauna of Benin

The following list includes 74 species (indicated by +) which are additions to the Benin list in Dowsett (1993), plus a few that were accepted there, but which require comment.

#### Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (+)

In February 2005, AG had good views of one on the Niger near Karimama, alongside the much smaller Long-tailed Cormorant *P. africanus*. She obtained an acceptable photograph.

#### Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* (+)

Records in the north include three on the Niger River between the Mékrou and Sota outfalls, on 1 December 1987 (JFW), and one towards Mékrou Tounga, Monsey district, on 22 February 2009 (AG). Regularly seen in the south, observations which ruled out the possibility of misidentified dark-phase Western Reef Egrets *E. gularis* including a maximum of 90 at Lac Nokoué, on 17 February 2010 (BP) and birds photographed at Ganvié, where 40–50 were present on 22–23 November 2010 (JG).

#### Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* (+)

One (white morph) carefully identified at Ouidah lagoon, on 24 January 2009 (pers. obs.), and records of dark-phase birds on or near the coast include a maximum of ten at Bouches du Roi, on 12 November 2010 (JG, photographed). A total of 115 reported during the 1996 Waterfowl Census (Dodman & Taylor 1996), but the caveat regarding identification of Black Herons and Western Reef Egrets (and indeed Little Egret *E. garzetta*) applies.

#### White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus* (+)

Bouet (1914) listed this species from Bodjécali on the Niger, but this was not repeated in Bouet (1955). However, there is an undated specimen of *T. leuconotus* in the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN) in Paris, labelled 'Botjécali,

Dahomey' (P. Boussès *in litt.* 2009). Listed for the Parc National (P.N.) du 'W' by Balança *et al.* (2007), but not by Crisler *et al.* (2003).

#### Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* (+)

One hundred were counted on the Niger River between Mékrou and Sota outfalls on 1 December 1987, with a single at the Chutes de Koudou on the same day (JFW), and one on the Pendjari River near Porga on 2 December 1987 (JFW). Dowsett (1993) was unaware of these records.

#### Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini* (+)

One perched by the Ouémé River in the Agbassa area on 20 February 2009 (pers. obs.), and seen in Pendjari and the adjoining hunting area in March–April 2006 (Salewski 2007a) and March 2008 (J&SM). Also seen at Tanguiéta on 29 May 2009 (J&SM). An adult near Mare Fougou, P.N. de la Pendjari on 28 January 2010 was photographed (AF *et al.*; Fig. 1). The observers were careful to exclude the possibility of Short-toed Snake Eagle *C. gallicus*. Green & Sayer (1979) stated that Thiollay (1977) reported the species from Pendjari but we see no mention of this record therein.



**Figure 1.** Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini*, adult, P.N. de la Pendjari, Benin, 28 January 2010 (Alain Fossé)

Circaète de Beaudouin *Circaetus beaudouini*, adulte, P.N. de la Pendjari, Bénin, 28 janvier 2010 (Alain Fossé)

#### Long-tailed Hawk *Urotriorchis macrourus* (+)

One sang a few times (tape-recorded) while flying through swamp forest at Lokoli (opposite Lokoli village) on 9–10 February 2009, at 07.30 hrs on both days (pers. obs.). By 10th it was calling



in degraded *Raphia* swamp further south, and was not heard on 11th. The bird was probably no more than a wanderer. The species is known from Ilaro (06°53'N 03°01'E), 40 km east of the Nigerian border (Button 1967–68). Cheke (2001) lists this species in the Guineo-Congolian biome table for Benin, but without a locality: this was based on an unpublished report from the Lama (R. A. Cheke *in litt.* 2009), which the observer has since withdrawn as a misidentification.

**Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* (+)

One on the road between Natitingou and Boukoumbé on 17 January 1999 (PMC & MC), a pale-morph bird north of Kountori, Atacora, on 23 January 2007 (J&SM), and another pale-morph individual in Pendjari on 29 December 2009 (BP). Thiollay (1977) reported seeing three in the north, but without providing details.

**Cassin's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus africanus* (+)

In the Forêt Classée de la Lama, one singing near layon (transect) 12 on 31 January 2009 (at 09.00 hrs) and one singing over forest along layon 11 on 1 March (at 09.55 hrs)—the characteristic *ku-ku-wee, ku-ku-wee* (FDL). A large nest in a 30-m tall *Ceiba* nearby (layon 11) might have belonged to this eagle. The nest was at a height of 22–23 m and was *c.* 1 m in diameter. First record for Benin; a sighting mentioned (without details) in an unpublished report by M. Waltert for the Lama was not repeated by Waltert & Mühlenberg (1999). The species is common in the forests of the Dahomey Gap on the Ghana / Togo border (pers. obs.), and it is known from Ipake (Ilaro), 40 km east of the Nigerian border (Elgood *et al.* 1994).

**Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (+)

One seen and heard singing briefly near layon 15 in the Lama on 4 February 2009, at 15.00 hrs (RJD), is the first acceptable record for the country. Lama is the only forest block of sufficient size in Benin to support a pair of this large monkey-eating eagle. Not found during a second visit by us later that month; perhaps a vagrant from Nigeria. Claffey (1999c) reported two juveniles together, calling, in the dry woodland of the Forêt Classée de l'Ouéme Supérieur, but if this species were present in what appears to be unsuitable habitat he would surely have heard the song of the adult. Moreover,

Crowned Eagles raise just a single young, and the occurrence of this species in the Upper Ouémé requires confirmation.

**Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* (+)

A juvenile marked with a satellite transmitter on Sardinia (Italy) was tracked through northern Benin on southbound passage towards Madagascar (Gschweng *et al.* 2008). It entered Benin on 10 November 2004 at *c.* 10°07'N 00°59'E (i.e. near Boukoumbé), then moved eastwards north of the Forêt Classée de l'Ouéme Supérieur to leave the country on 12 November, roughly east of Nikki (taken from a series of dates and coordinates *per* M. Gschweng *in litt.* 2009).

**Ahanta Francolin** *Francolinus ahantensis* (+)

There are numerous observations north to at least Ouari Maro (Claffey 1995; pers. obs.). Dowsett (1993) had listed the reports by Bouet (1914) and Brunel (1958)—the latter only heard—as requiring confirmation.

**Savile's Bustard** *Lophotis savilei* (+)

Photographed in P.N. du 'W', between Kofouno and Mare 25, in January 2005 (AG; Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** Savile's Bustard *Lophotis savilei*, P.N. du 'W', Benin, January 2005 (Agnès Giannotti)

Outarde de Savile *Lophotis savilei*, P.N. du 'W', Bénin, janvier 2005 (Agnès Giannotti)

**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

One photographed at Bouches du Roi on 12 November 2010 (JG). Twice reported at Guézin: three feeding with a large number of Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* on 21 January 1994, and a group of ten on 5 February 1996



(PMC). There is a report of 120 in Dodman & Taylor (1996); this exceptional total, and, even more remarkably, the 2,000 reported from Keta lagoon in south-east Ghana (Cheke & Walsh 1996) were probably misidentified Black-winged Stilts, which raises doubts about the reliability of some other figures presented in various Waterfowl Census reports. Dowsett (1993) listed this species from Benin on the basis of Bannerman (1953), but the record there was not from Grand-Popo, but from Klein Popo (Anécho) in Togo.

**Grey Pratincole** *Glareola cinerea*

One at a small pond at Bétérou on 22 July 1997 (PMC). Up to 30 were seen on the beach in front of the Sheraton Hotel, Cotonou, between 10 July and November 1999 (BB, PMC); and the species was photographed in the same area on 25 September 2010 (BP; Fig. 3). A pair on the Niger, just upstream of Malanville, on an unknown date (J. F. Walsh *in litt.* 1988).



**Figure 3.** Grey Pratincole *Glareola cinerea*, Cotonou, Benin, 25 September 2010 (Bruno Portier)

Glaréole grise *Glareola cinerea*, Cotonou, Bénin, 25 septembre 2010 (Bruno Portier)

**Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* (+)

Several recorded on successive days at Grand-Popo on 19–21 November 1995, including immatures, in an area of dry swamp in front of the Auberge (PMC), and an immature at Cotonou on 24 September 2010 (BP). In the north, an adult in breeding plumage at Kakikoka Dam, Bétérou, on 8 April 1998 (PMC), and also seen in the Pendjari (Salewski 2007a).

**Forbes's Plover** *Charadrius forbesi* (+)

Most records are between December and April (up to ten birds), from the coast near Ouidah (PMC) north to the central Atacora (ML). There are also

wet season reports, from Datori in July 2003 and Tchaourou on 22 August 2009 (J&SM). A specimen was collected at Abomey on 2 February by 'Vaterlot' (= Emmanuel-Georges Waterlot) (Didier & Boudarel 1913, a reference that seems to have been overlooked by all recent authors). A specimen reported as *Aegialitis tricollaris*, collected at Zimvo (Zinvié) in January (Bocage 1892) was perhaps *C. forbesi*, but it would have been destroyed in the fire at the Lisbon museum in 1975.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* (+)

Present in small numbers on the coast, with a maximum of nine at Bouches du Roi on 12 November 2010 (JG), and the latest there on 1 April 1994 (PMC).

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* (+)

Frequently seen on the coast, in groups of up to 15 at Bouches du Roi and Cotonou on dates between 11 September (2010, photo: BP) and 22 April (1996: PMC).

**Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* (+)

On 17 February 2010, one was flushed from the wet grass and swamp areas of Plaine du Sô (BP). One was seen in the Pendjari on 19 November 2010 (JG). The observers concerned noted the deeper voice and short bill of this stocky species, as opposed to Common Snipe *G. gallinago*. Dowsett (1993) questioned the sight record in Brunel (1958) from Lac Nokoué, given the difficulty that exists in identifying snipe in the field.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* (+)

Small numbers (up to six) in December–March at Guézin (J&SM, PMC). Groups of 30 on the Niger at Bello Tounga, near Karimama, on 6 January 2005 (photographed) and 1 October 2006 (AG).

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* (+)

Small numbers (up to three) on the coast between 6 November (2010, when photographed by BP near Cotonou: Fig. 4) and 1 April (1994, one at Bouches du Roi: PMC).

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* (+)

Nine were well seen at Bouches du Roi on 12 November 2010 (JG)—the observer distinguished





**Figure 4.** Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Cotonou, Benin, 6 November 2010 (Bruno Portier)

Barge rousse *Limosa lapponica*, Cotonou, Bénin, 6 novembre 2010 (Bruno Portier)



**Figure 5.** Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*, Niger River at Karimama, Benin, March 2008 (Agnès Giannotti)

Sterne hansel *Sterna nilotica*, fleuve Niger à Karimama, Bénin, mars 2008 (Agnès Giannotti)



**Figure 6.** A group of Royal Terns *Sterna maxima* and Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* at Cotonou, Benin, 9 September 2010, including ringed birds (Bruno Portier)

Un groupe de Sternes royales *Sterna maxima* et Sternes caugek *S. sandvicensis* à Cotonou; Bénin, 9 septembre 2010, avec des oiseaux bagués (Bruno Portier)

them from nearby Whimbrel *N. phaeopus*, something that is not clear from previous reports (e.g. Dodman & Taylor 1996, Grell *et al.* 2005).

#### **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* (+)

One was well seen at Cotonou on 21–23 November 2010 (BP, WP) and one at Bouches du Roi on 12 November 2010 (JG). Other reports of singles are: in the marsh in front of the Auberge at Grand-Popo on 26–29 April 1995, and near a group of Spotted Redshanks *T. erythropus* at Guézin on 6 December 1996 (PMC). Inland records have been published without supporting details (e.g. Niaouli: van den Akker 2003a).

#### **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* (+)

One at Grand-Popo on 22 April 1995 (PMC). Three at the lagoon in Cotonou on 31 March 1999 (JGoo). One seen at Guézin on 18 January

2007 (J&SM). In the north, one in the Pendjari on 18 November 2010 (JG), and the species was photographed on the Niger River near Karimama in January 2005 and March 2008 (AG; Fig. 5).

#### **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* (+)

A few records from the coast and Ganvié of small numbers, between 27 August (2003: SF) and December (2004: J&SM).

#### **Royal Tern** *Sterna maxima* (+)

Frequently seen on the coast in all months, often in groups of 10–25, with a maximum of 369 in Cotonou harbour on 6 November 2010 (BP). Ranges inland some 15 km to the north side of Lac Nokoué (AF *et al.*). A group photographed at Cotonou on 9 September 2010 included a ringed bird (BP; Fig 6), presumably originating from a colony in north-west Africa.



**Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii* (+)

A bird ringed in Dublin, Republic of Ireland, on 11 July 1997 was recovered in Département Atlantique (c.06°35'N 02°15'E) on 13 December 1997 (*Tauraco* database, confirmed by Mrs J. Clark, British Trust for Ornithology, *in litt.* 2010).

**Damara Tern** *Sterna balaenarum* (+)

Up to 53 were on the beach at Cotonou harbour on 9–17 September 2010 (BP, WP; Fig. 7). Cheke (2001) mentioned up to 200 birds at the Bouches du Roi, but confusion with Little Tern *S. albifrons* is possible; JG had good views of four there on 12 November 2010.



**Figure 7.** Damara Tern *Sterna balaenarum*, Cotonou harbour, Benin, 11 September 2010 (Bruno Portier)

Sterne des baleiniers *Sterna balaenarum*, port de Cotonou, Bénin, 11 septembre 2010 (Bruno Portier)

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* (+)

Six in partial breeding dress on the Niger near Karimama on 27 February 2008 (photographed: AG). On and near the coast there are a few reports in November to April (JG, BP, WP), with a maximum 35 at Lac Ahémé, of which most were moulting into breeding dress, on 28 February 2010 (BP, WP).

**Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus* (+)

Seen in P.N. de la Pendjari on 26 and 28 March 2003 (J&SM), but not during other visits in January to March in other years. In P.N. du 'W' (Niger) the species has been reported in all months between November and July (Crisler *et al.* 2003).

**European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* (+)

One at the Mékrou / Niger confluence on 23 February 2009 (photographed: AG). It had been reported at Agoué by Millet-Horsin (1923), but in the absence of a specimen the record was not accepted; this observer was not always reliable, claiming for example that he had proof of nest-building by Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* (Millet-Horsin 1921).

**African Collared Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* (+)

Present at Karimama, apparently at all seasons (photographed there by AG, on 29 October 2005: Fig. 8).



**Figure 8.** African Collared Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea*, Karimama, Benin, 29 October 2005 (Agnès Giannotti)

Tourterelle rieuse *Streptopelia roseogrisea*, Karimama, Bénin, 29 octobre 2005 (Agnès Giannotti)

**Black Cuckoo** *Cuculus clamosus* (+)

A few records, from the coast (e.g. Porto Novo, on 5 August 2007: pers. obs.) north at least to Ouari Maro (Claffey 1995; J&SM). Observations include a juvenile begging from a Marsh Tchagra *Tchagra minutus* near Lokoli on 3 September 2003 (SF), a new host for this cuckoo (R. B. Payne *in litt.* 2009). Dowsett (1993) queried the specimen of *Coccytes cafer* in Oustalet (1898), and indeed it refers not to this species, but was the original name of Levaillant's Cuckoo *Clamator levaillantii*.

**African Emerald Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx cupreus* (+)

Several records, north to the Lama at 07°N (Waltert & Mühlenberg 1999; pers. obs.). Note that the name *Cuculus cupreus* Boddaert was



used in error in some old references (Sousa 1887, Oustalet 1898, Didier & Boudarel 1913, Bouet 1914), such records referring to Didric Cuckoo *C. caprius*.

**Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster* (+)  
Widespread at all forest localities visited in 2009, from Drabo Gbo to Lokoli (pers. obs.). Tape-recorded. Presumably confused with Senegal Coucal *C. senegalensis* by previous observers. Far more often heard than seen (seen once at close range at the Lama), this coucal has a deep, slow song and especially contact call (a rapid *doukdoukdoukdoukdouk...*) for which there is no equivalent in Senegal *C. senegalensis* or Blue-headed Coucals *C. monachus*. Especially common in Niaouli plateau forest, more scattered in Lama transition woodland and Pobè, and uncommon at Lokoli (where the understorey is generally too open). Common in the forests of the Dahomey Gap in Ghana and Togo, and on the Nigerian side of the border (Button 1967–68).

**Vermiculated Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia bouvieri* (+)  
Apparently common in Lokoli swamp forest (pers. obs.), at the western limit of its range (a specimen is known from as far west as the Lagos area at 03°28'E: Elgood *et al.* 1994). A full song (seven notes) was heard before dawn, at 06.30 hrs, in flooded forest on the western bank on 7 February 2009; two different birds (including an immature, with descending call) were heard the next morning further away. After moving to the eastern bank on 8 February, two birds were heard countersinging from 05.30 to 06.40 hrs in the morning of 9 February, in wet forest with *Raphia* south of Lokoli village. Full songs (tape-recorded) included the typical introductory hoot followed by a series of 5–8 even notes, and the ending of one or two hoots (*cf.* Chappuis 2000).

**Mottled Swift** *Tachymarptis aequatorialis* (+)  
A bird which came to drink at the Mare Sacrée, P.N. de la Pendjari, was watched at close range (12 February 2010: pers. obs., J&SM), as were some 40 together with 700 Alpine Swifts *T. melba* at Mare Bali on 17 November 2010 (JG). Confirmatory photos were obtained on both occasions, but are too poor to publish.

**Blue-naped Mousebird** *Urocolius macrourus*  
Dowsett (1993) listed the species on the basis of an unpublished report by R. A. Cheke (*in litt.* 2009): this concerned a sighting of one at Dégué-dégué, near Malanville, on 25 October 1977 (RAC). This was doubtless a vagrant, as from northern Nigeria westwards records are north of 13°N (*Tauraco* database).

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus* (+)  
Two were watched closely on 4 February 2010 at Point Triple, P.N. du 'W' (pers. obs.). In the Niger side of the park there are only a few February and March records (Crisler *et al.* 2003). An April report further south in Benin (from Monts Kouffé: unpublished report in Claffey 1995) should be considered uncertain.

**Hairy-breasted Barbet** *Tricholaema hirsuta* (+)  
Discovered at two forest sites, Lokoli and Pobè, in 2009 (pers. obs.), with a few singing on a daily basis and apparently territorial (as tested using playback at Pobè). Tape-recorded. Button (1967–68) recorded it as common in the region of Ilaro, 40 km east of the Nigerian border. Listed from Pendjari-Arly (Balança *et al.* 2007), but this is no doubt a misidentification, as there is no rain forest there for this Guineo-Congolian species.

**Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksi* (+)  
Two singing just outside riparian forest near Agbassa on 21 February 2009 (pers. obs.). One was singing in a 26-m tall *Anogeissus*, and another 120 m away in a 28-m tall *Parkia biglobosa*; they were countersinging at 10.15–10.35 hrs; then the first moved to sing in a bare *Bombax costatum* (30 m tall). Well seen and tape-recorded. The habitat near Agbassa is very similar to that on the Konkori escarpment in Mole National Park (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2008). One seen at close range in a mixed-species flock in Niaouli plateau forest on 24 February 2009 (FDL).

Although usually associated with Guineo-Congolian secondary forest, this honeyguide extends into the transition zone and also into the Sudanian zone where it is not uncommon in riparian situations (at least from Chad west to Ghana).





**Figure 9.** European Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Didani, Benin, 23 January 2011 (Johannes & Sharon Merz)

Torcol fourmilier *Jynx torquilla*, Didani, Bénin, 23 janvier 2011 (Johannes & Sharon Merz)

### European Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* (+)

One was seen and photographed at Didani, on 23 January 2011 (J&SM: Fig. 9).

### Little Spotted (Green-backed) Woodpecker

*Campethera cailliautii* (+)

At least two singing in flooded forest at Lokoli in February 2009; one was tape-recorded (pers. obs.). In the forests of the transition zone in eastern Ghana, this woodpecker is normally found near water (pers. obs.). Listed from Pendjari-Arly (Balança *et al.* 2007), but in the absence of details of how it was distinguished from similar small woodpeckers, its occurrence so far north should not be accepted. Didier & Boudarel (1913) listed a specimen under the name *Chrysopicus permistus*, without locality, but in a collection obtained by Waterlot in Dahomey. P. Boussès (*in litt.* 2009) confirms that this specimen is in the MNHN and that it is indeed *C. cailliautii*, the label reading '15 janvier 1910, Dahomey'.

### Buff-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera nivos* (+)

The calls of one bird (a slurred *wiurrrrrr* lasting one second and descending in pitch, given three times) were tape-recorded in Pobè forest on 12 February 2009 (FDL). This was in a section of forest with dense understorey and the bird was not seen. There is an earlier unpublished observation by M. van den Akker (*in litt.* 2009) who mist-netted and photographed a female in Lama forest on 24 October 2002 (Fig. 10). As this woodpecker is very common in the dry forests of eastern Ghana



**Figure 10.** Buff-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera nivos* mist-netted in Lama forest, Benin, 24 October 2002 (Maarten van den Akker)

Pic tacheté *Campethera nivos* capturé au filet dans la forêt de la Lama, Bénin, 24 octobre 2002 (Maarten van den Akker)



**Figure 11.** Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni* mist-netted in Lama forest, Benin, 27 February 2009 (Robert J. Dowsett)

Bulbul de Baumann *Phyllastrephus baumanni* capturé au filet dans la forêt de la Lama, Bénin, 27 février 2009 (Robert J. Dowsett)

it was to be expected in Benin, but the species appears to be quite rare. *C. nivos* is known from the Ilaro region 40 km east of the Nigerian border (Button 1967–68). Didier & Boudarel (1913) listed a specimen of *C. nivos*, without locality, in the Waterlot collection. P. Boussès (*in litt.* 2009) confirms that this specimen is in the MNHN and that it is indeed *C. nivos*, the label reading '15 janvier 1910, Dahomey'.

### Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni* (+)

Common in Lama forest (on all layons visited, 11–15, and off 9), especially in transition woodland; including the denser forms (midway



between transition woodland and forest) (pers. obs.). As many as four were caught in one mist-net on layon 15 (Fig. 11), together with four White-throated Greenbuls *P. albigularis*. Quite vocal in February 2009, despite the drought, singing and calling a lot (tape-recorded several times). This bird is common in all of the dry forests of eastern Ghana as far as the Togo border, occurring low down in thickets under open canopy or in clearings (pers. obs.); east of Benin there are specimens from the Lagos area at 03°25'E (Fishpool 2000).

**White-throated Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus albigularis* (+)

Locally common in a few forests between 06°44'N and 07°17'N: at Niaouli (van den Akker 2003a; pers. obs.), Lama (Waltert & Mühlenberg 1999; pers. obs.) and Pobè (pers. obs.). Absent from Lokoli, where the understorey appears too open. A sight record from Bégon (Brunel 1958) was considered by Dowsett (1993) to require confirmation, and those from north of 09°N (Claffey 1995, Grell *et al.* 2005, Balança *et al.* 2007) are certainly erroneous, for a species restricted to Guineo-Congolian vegetation.

**White-tailed Ant Thrush** *Neocossyphus poensis* (+)

See next species.



**Figure 12.** White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis* mist-netted in Pobè forest, Benin, 21 May 2003 (Maarten van den Akker)

Néocossyphe à queue blanche *Neocossyphus poensis* capturé au filet dans la forêt de Pobè, Bénin, 21 mai 2003 (Maarten van den Akker)

**Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush** *Stizorhina finschi* (+)

At least two encountered in Lokoli swamp forest in 2009; they were located by their characteristic loud calls *ruit-ruit-ruit* or *wreet wreet wreet*, which were tape-recorded (pers. obs.). Both individuals were moving through the forest and did not appear to be holding a territory. One seen in the same area on 14 November 2010 (JG). New for Benin, but possibly just wanderers. Didier & Boudarel (1913) listed a specimen of *Cassinia finschi*, without locality, in the Waterlot collection. P. Boussès (*in litt.* 2009) confirms that there is a specimen in the MNHN labelled thus and that it does seem to be *S. finschi*. The label reads '25 Xbre 1910, Loc.: Porto-Novo', though it might be speculated if Waterlot did not obtain it elsewhere (Porto-Novo merely being where he was stationed).

Not recorded at Pobè in February 2009; T. Loubegnon (pers. comm.) described to us a 'White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis*' he watched with M. van den Akker (mentioned in van den Akker & Claffey 2004) as feeding in the mid-stratum (midway between the ground and canopy), snatching prey on tree trunks and also flycatching. This fits a *Stizorhina* far better than a *Neocossyphus*, and the two can be confused on general plumage characters. However, M. van den Akker (*in litt.* 2009) did mist-net and photograph a *Neocossyphus* in Pobè, on 21 May 2003 (Fig. 12), a fact not mentioned in his paper. As ant thrushes require very large territories in sheltered forest with deep shade, the forest at Pobè appears both unsuitable and far too small for the species to become established there. It can be no more than an irregular vagrant from the Nigerian side. In the 1960s at least, both White-tailed Ant Thrush and Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush were common in Ilaro Forest Reserve 40 km east of Pobè (Button 1967–68).

**Rufous Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* (+)

One was well seen in P.N. de la Pendjari, on 25–27 January 2007 (J&SM). Claffey (1995) reported seeing one near Bétérou, on 26 December 1992, which is considerably further south than one might expect this species typical of the Sahel, and we prefer to treat the latter record as uncertain.



### Rufous-tailed (Common) Rock Thrush

*Monticola saxatilis* (+)

One in non-breeding plumage was present on rocky terrain on the east side of the road between Djougou and Natitingou on 17 January 1999 (PMC & MC).

### Greater Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus rufescens* (+)

Seen and heard in a few places in mangrove and adjacent *Typha* and *Phragmites* beds at Togbin and Ouidah, on 22–24 January 2009 (pers. obs.), at Grand-Popo, e.g. on 4 February 2010 (AF *et al.*) and Plaine du Sô, on 17 February 2010 (BP).

### Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (+)

SM had very good views of one in a mango tree by her house at Cobly, on 7 January 2010. It was obviously a warbler, about the same size as a Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus* present nearby, uniformly grey with a black cap, and thus a male. It is a species she knows well from Europe. Claffey (1998) reported this species at Bétérrou, on 23 March 1997, on the basis of a 'flock of some 10–12 birds in a thicket, all apparently of the same species', but these numbers seem remarkable.

### Black-backed Cisticola *Cisticola eximius* (+)

Two were observed closely, perched in grassland near Mare Fogou, P.N. de la Pendjari, on 13 February 2010 (pers. obs.). J&SM saw and heard some at Nanagadé, near Cobly, on 28 December 2010 (Fig. 13). One was seen in the Natitingou area, on 16 November 2010 (JG). Salewski (2007b) corrected the earlier claim from Pendjari



**Figure 13.** Black-backed Cisticola *Cisticola eximius*, Nanakadé, Benin, 28 December 2010 (Johannes & Sharon Merz)

Cisticole à dos noir *Cisticola eximius*, Nanakadé, Bénin, 28 décembre 2010 (Johannes & Sharon Merz)

by Salewski & Korb (2007) as a misidentification, but his suggestion that the species might be found in northern Benin in time is confirmed.

### Rufous Cisticola *Cisticola rufus* (+)

Two singles feeding on the ground among short fresh grass in tall woodland near Agbassa on 21 February 2009 (FDL). Very small, plain rufous-brown above. Near Cobly a singing bird was observed 6 June 2010 by J&SM, who compared the song to Chappuis (2000).

### Red-cheeked Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophya blissetti* (+)

Several in dense thickets in semi-closed forest along layon 15 at Lama (pers. obs.). Tape-recorded and mist-netted (Fig. 14). This species was singing rather little in February 2009, and is probably more widespread than found to date in Lama forest. Common in the region of Ilaro, 40 km east of the Nigerian border (Button 1967–68).



**Figure 14.** Red-cheeked Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophya blissetti* mist-netted in Lama forest, Benin, 1 March 2009 (Robert J. Dowsett)

Pririt de Blisset *Dyaphorophya blissetti* capturé au filet dans la forêt de la Lama, Bénin, 1 mars 2009 (Robert J. Dowsett)

### Spotted Creeper *Salpornis pilonotus* (+)

Tape-recorded at Bembéréké on 19 February 1969 (Chappuis 2000; C. Chappuis *in litt.* 2009). Reportedly seen in 1977 at Natitingou (AAG).

### Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi* (+)

A group of five watched at close range feeding on the red flowers of the liane *Combretum racemosum*, at the edge of bas-fond (swamp) forest, at Niaouli,



on 28 January 2009 (FDL). Identified by their small size, olivaceous colour tinged with yellow on the belly, only slightly decurved bill and pale eye-ring; they were giving thin but sharp *tsi* or *tsip* calls, characteristic of the species. In Ghana, where the species is widespread, *C. racemosum* is its favourite food plant in the dry season, when these lianes are in full flower. East of Benin, Button (1967–68) reported it from Ilaro, 40 km east of the Nigerian border.

**Tiny Sunbird** *Cinnyris minullus* (+)

Several pairs in the midstorey and at edges in Pobè forest in February 2009 (pers. obs.). One pair well seen (female greyer below than Olive-bellied Sunbird *C. chloropygius*) and song tape-recorded, the song being weaker and sweeter than that of Olive-bellied Sunbird. Frequently singing in the early morning, in trees or lianes at heights of 10–25 m above the ground. A tape-recording from near Cotonou (Chappuis 2000) is not typical of *C. minullus*, and is more probably from *C. chloropygius*. In Nigeria there is a specimen from Badagri (06°25'N 02°53'E), close to the Benin border, near the coast (Elgood *et al.* 1994).

**Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* (+)

Seen near Batia on 17 March 2008 (J&SM), a male near Tchaourou on 17 February 2009 (pers. obs.) and a female at Grand-Popo on 12 November 2010 (JG). In each case the possibility of African Golden Oriole *O. auratus* was excluded.

**Emin's Shrike** *Lanius gubernator* (+)

Two in dry scrub near inselbergs on the road between Ouari Maro and Bassila on 16 January 1999 (PMC & MC) and a single, probably from the same pair, was there again on 6 March 1999 (PMC). A female seen and a poor photograph obtained, in woodland in the zone de chasse de la Mékrou, on 10 February 2010 (pers. obs.).

**Marsh Tchagra** *Tchagra minutus* (+)

A pair seen 8 km north of Ouari Maro on 16 February 1998 (PMC). A male with a begging juvenile cuckoo, believed to be a Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus*, at Lokoli on 3 September 2003 (SF).



**Figure 15.** Chestnut-bellied Starling *Lamprotornis pulcher*, Karimama, Benin, March 2005 (Agnès Giannotti)

Merle métallique à ventre roux *Lamprotornis pulcher*, Karimama, Bénin, mars 2005 (Agnès Giannotti)

**Chestnut-bellied Starling** *Lamprotornis pulcher* (+)

A group observed along the road from Tanguiéta to Porga in April 1996 (PMC). Seen in Pendjari on 18 March 2008 (J&SM). There are also reports from the central Atacora in July (ML), Bello Tounga, near Karimama, in August and March 2005 (AG, photographed: Fig. 15) and Malanville in February–March (year unknown: CdV & IvW).

**Speckle-fronted Weaver** *Sporopipes frontalis* (+)

Several observations of small groups at Bello Tounga, near Karimama, where first seen in August 2003, and in December and February in subsequent years (photographed by AG: Fig. 16). A record in Claffey (1995) is erroneous (P. M. Claffey *in litt.* 2008).



**Figure 16.** Speckle-fronted Weaver *Sporopipes frontalis*, Karimama, Benin, August 2009 (Agnès Giannotti)

Moineau quadrillé *Sporopipes frontalis*, Karimama, Bénin, mars 2005 (Agnès Giannotti)





**Figure 17.** Pair of Slender-billed Weavers *Ploceus pelzelni*, Ouidah, Benin, 4 February 2010 (Alain Fossé)

Tisserin de Pelzeln *Ploceus pelzelni*, un couple à Ouidah, Bénin, 4 février 2010 (Alain Fossé)

**Slender-billed Weaver** *Ploceus pelzelni* (+)

Not uncommon along the coast, from Grand-Popo (J&SM) and Ouidah (pers. obs.; photographed by AF *et al.*), inland to the Plaine du Sô (pers. obs., BP *et al.*: Fig. 17). Didier & Boudarel (1913) listed a female specimen identified as *Sitagra monacha*, without locality, in the Waterlot collection. P. Boussès (*in litt.* 2009) confirms that this specimen is in the MNHN and is labelled '15 janvier 1910, Dahomey'.

**Fan-tailed Widowbird (Whydah)** *Euplectes axillaris* (+)

Douaud (1955: 302) described seeing the species in a marsh near Malanville, on 11 August 1953, apparently on the Benin side of the Niger—which reference was overlooked by Dowsett (1993). Ouidah is the type locality of the Yellow-mantled Widowbird *E. macroura*, and the English name whydah should be applied to those birds and not the long-tailed parasitic widows *Vidua*.

**Red-collared Widowbird (Whydah)** *Euplectes ardens* (+)

Douaud (1955: 305) reported seeing a 'superbe Ouidah noir' of the race *concolor* at Natitingou, on 14 August 1953—which reference was overlooked by Dowsett (1993). A small flock of non-breeders near Ouari Maro, in rank growth outside forest in the valley below Soubakpérou hill, on 19 February 2009 (pers. obs.), were considered very probably this species. They were watched at close range: wings almost black, back strongly marked and more contrasting than in Northern Red Bishop *E. franciscanus*, breast richly buff, and call a thin *see* or *tsee*.



**Figure 18.** Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba*, Karimama, Benin, August 2005 (Agnès Giannotti)

Beaumarquet melba *Pytilia melba*, Karimama, Bénin, août 2005 (Agnès Giannotti)

**Pale-fronted Negrofinch** *Nigrita luteifrons* (+)

A pair in *Elaeis* palms just outside Pobè forest, calling (tape-recorded), on 12 February 2009, and a pair in a fruiting *Ficus thonningii* inside forest on 14 February 2009 (pers. obs.); the contact call of this species, a descending series of soft whistles, is diagnostic. Button (1967–68) who knew the species from Ilaro (40 km east of the Nigerian border), also mentioned this descending sequence.

**Green-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia melba* (+)

Photographed at Bello Tounga, Karimama, in August 2005 (AG ; Fig. 18). Its parasite is Sahel Paradise Widow *Vidua orientalis* (known from the same locality).

**Blue-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rubricata* (+)

Payne (1982) and Dowsett (1993) suggested that this species needed confirmation in Benin, its occurrence then being based solely on a sighting from Pendjari-Arly (Green & Sayer 1979). We now know that it occurs in rank growth on the edge of forest in the area of Agbassa-Ouari Maro-Bétérou (Claffey 1995; pers. obs.). It has also been reported further south, at Niaouli (van den Akker 2003a).

**Zebra Waxbill** *Amandava subflava* (+)

Several flocks of up to 15 on the Plaine du Sô in April and May (2010: BP, WP), 20 observed at Bétérou on 12 February 1996 (PMC) and ten in grassland just outside Lokoli forest on 5 February 2009 (pers. obs.). Further north, in February 2010, a dozen in the Pendjari on plains near Mare Fogou and Mare Tiabiga, and some at Batia (pers. obs., J&SM). An earlier record, by Bouet



(1914), from Agouagon near the Ouémé River, was overlooked by Dowsett (1993).

**Barka Indigobird** *Vidua larvaticola* (+)

A male in breeding plumage was seen on 6 February 2010 near Mare 25, P.N. du 'W', in association with its host Black-faced Firefinch *Lagonosticta larvata* (pers. obs.). Two males thought to be this species were near Cobly on 30 August 2009 (J&SM).

**Pale-winged (Wilson's) Indigobird** *Vidua wilsoni* (+)

Confirmed from P.N. de la Pendjari, where imitating calls of its host Bar-breasted Firefinch *Lagonosticta rufopicta* in February 2010 (FDL). Reported from Bétérou by Claffey (1995), but without details of how identified and he did not report the host species.

**Sahel Paradise Whydah (Widow)** *Vidua orientalis* (+)

A male was photographed in August 2004 at Karimama (AG: Fig. 19), where its host Green-winged Pytilia is known. A specimen of '*Steganura paradisea aucupum*' was reported from Agouagon (Bouet 1914)—this is what is now known as *V. orientalis*, but its host does not occur in southern Benin, and Exclamatory or Togo Paradise Whydah is more likely. Note that the name whydah is more correctly applied to the long-tailed *Euplectes* species (see *E. axillaris* above).



**Figure 19.** Sahel Paradise Whydah *Vidua orientalis*, Karimama, Benin, August 2004 (Agnès Giannotti)

Veuve à collier d'or *Vidua orientalis*, Karimama, Bénin, août 2004 (Agnès Giannotti)

**Exclamatory Paradise Whydah (Widow)** *Vidua interjecta* (+)

Many in breeding plumage were present in P.N. du 'W', in February 2010, with photographs taken and dropped tail feathers collected (pers.



**Figure 20.** Exclamatory Paradise Whydah *Vidua interjecta*, P.N. du 'W', Benin, January 2007 (Agnès Giannotti)

Veuve d'Uelle *Vidua interjecta*, P.N. du 'W', Bénin, janvier 2007 (Agnès Giannotti)

obs.), and the species was also photographed there by AG in January 2007 (Fig. 20). Birds seen at various places in the north-west were thought by J&SM to be this species, from Pendjari south to the Cobly area. Similarly, birds identified as *V. interjecta* in breeding plumage were seen in the southern Borgou in October–January (PMC). Its host Red-winged Pytilia *Pytilia phoenicoptera* is common in northern Benin, occurring south to Bétérou (Claffey 1995).

**Togo Paradise Whydah (Widow)** *Vidua togoensis* (+)

A male in partial breeding plumage in the Pendjari, at the Campement des Eléphants, on 14 February 2010, with characteristic yellow nape, was considered to be this species (RJD). Its host, Yellow-winged Pytilia *Pytilia hypogrammica*, is not yet known with certainty in Benin, although it has been listed from the Pendjari (Delvingt *et al.* 1989, Grell *et al.* 2005).

**White-rumped Seedeater** *Serinus leucopygius* (+)

Seen occasionally between January and March (in 2003, 2005, 2007) in P.N. de la Pendjari (J&SM). Listed, without comment, from Niaouli (van den Akker 2003a), certainly in error, as this is a northern species of dry country.

**Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* (+)

One found in rocky hills near Cobly on 14 November 2009 (SM). A bunting seen in good light, with its yellow submoustachial stripe contrasting with the otherwise uniformly grey head and the cinnamon breast. It was thought to be a male. The observer had become familiar with the species in Cyprus earlier in the year.



### Species (not listed above) for which an acceptable record has been published since Dowsett (1993)

Since the publication of Dowsett (1993) there have been 58 published additions to the country avifauna. A few additional species in these works are considered to require confirmation, and are listed in the next section.

- Claffey (1995): Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, Lesser Moorhen *G. angulata*, Leaflove *Pyrrhurus scandens*, Yellow-bellied Hyliota *Hyliota flavigaster*, Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Grey-headed Oliveback *Nesocharis capistrata*, Cabanis's Bunting *Emberiza cabanisi*.
- Anciaux (1996): White-crested Tiger Heron *Tigriornis leucolopha*, White-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura pulchra*, Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Forest Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus fulgidus*, Black-bellied Seedcracker *Pyrenestes ostrinus*.
- Claffey (1997): Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*.
- Claffey (1999b): Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*.
- Waltert & Mühlenberg (1999): Blue-throated Roller *Eurystomus gularis*, Purple-throated Cuckooshrike *Campephaga quiscalina*, Cameroon Sombre Greenbul *Andropadus curvirostris*, Slender-billed Greenbul *A. gracilirostris*, Red-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda syndactylus*, Forest Robin *Stiphrornis erythrothorax*, Green Hylia *Hylia prasina*, Buff-throated Apalis *Apalis rufogularis*, Fraser's Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata*, Shrike Flycatcher *Megabyas flammulatus*, Chestnut Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophyia castanea*, Puvel's Illadopsis *Illadopsis puveli*, Purple-headed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis purpureiceps*, Yellow-mantled Weaver *Ploceus tricolor*, Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina*.
- van den Akker (2003a): Black Sparrowhawk *Accipiter melanoleucus*, Thick-billed Cuckoo *Pachycoccyx audeberti*, Black-shouldered Nightjar *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis*, Naked-faced Barbet *Gymnobucco calvus*, Spotted Honeyguide *Indicator maculatus*, Honeyguide Greenbul *Baeopogon indicator*, Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus*, European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, Melodious

Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*, Rufous-crowned Eremomela *Eremomela badiceps*, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, Yellow-browed Camaroptera *Camaroptera superciliaris*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Tithylia *Pholidornis rushiae*, Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch *Nigrita bicolor*.

- van den Akker (2003b): Yellow-whiskered Greenbul *Andropadus latirostris*, Western Bearded Greenbul *Criniger barbatus*, White-browed Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria cinerascens*.
- Crisler *et al.* (2003): Horus Swift *Apus horus*.
- van Muyen (2005): Common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*.
- van Muyen (2006): Dunlin *Calidris alpina*.
- Salewski & Korb (2007): Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Ayres's Hawk Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii*, Dorst's Cisticola *Cisticola guinea*.
- Jones (2008): Brown Sunbird *Anthreptes gabonicus*, Reichenbach's Sunbird *Nectarinia reichenbachii*, Orange Weaver *Ploceus auran-tius*. Brown Sunbird and the weaver were not claimed to be new, but unpublished reports from the Lama and the Upper Ouémé River, respectively, appear to have been misidentified.
- Merz & Merz (2010): Streaky-breasted Flufftail *Sarothrura boehmi*.
- Manners (2010): Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*.

The great majority of the forest species listed above were also recorded by us in 2009 (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2009).

Of those 176 species listed for Benin by Dowsett (1993) on the basis of reports from the Pendjari-Arly transborder park (Green & Sayer 1979), which gave no indication of which country, nearly all have subsequently been confirmed to occur in the Benin sector (see, e.g., Salewski 2007a, van der Spek 2008) or elsewhere in the country. Those that cannot yet be accepted for Benin are listed below along with other species requiring confirmation.

### Species whose presence on the Benin list is considered erroneous

Species that had been accepted in the 1993 Benin list (Dowsett 1993) are indicated (-).



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**Corn Crane** *Crex crex*

Libois (1995) reported seeing this species in some numbers in southern Benin, but subsequently corrected his identification to Black Coucal *Centropus grillii* (Libois 1996: 63).

**Grey Parrot** *Psittacus erithacus*

According to Bouet (1914), this species was reportedly very rare in the forest region north of Sakété. He saw birds in captivity said to have originated from this region. However, Dändliker (1992) demonstrated the lack of historical evidence for a wild population in the Dahomey region. Feral groups of up to seven are often seen in Cotonou, such birds showing the characters of nominate *erithacus* (B. Portier *in litt.* 2010).

**Square-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus fossii*

A female specimen from Porto-Novo, taken on 3 September 1910 (Didier & Boudarel 1913) must be a misidentification, as the species occurs no nearer than Gabon.

**White-bellied Kingfisher** *Alcedo leucogaster*

Van den Akker (2003a) thought he saw one in a teak tree on the edge of secondary forest at Niaouli. The habitat there is quite unsuitable (pers. obs.), and we suspect the bird was an African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx pictus*. If this species of streams in the forest interior were to occur in the remnants in southern Benin, van den Akker would surely have mist-netted one during the considerable amount of time he spent ringing.

**Black Bee-eater** *Merops gularis*

Anciaux (1996) reported it in the bas-fond of Niaouli forest. However, the species was not seen in good conditions (a distant group of bee-eaters against the light, M.-R. Anciaux *in litt.* 2009) and it would be more prudent to consider the presence of this species in Benin as unproven, as no-one else has been able to confirm it.

**Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill** *Tockus camurus*

A single female was reported from an area of old secondary forest, 5 km east of Bétérou, on 19 October 1998 (Claffey 1999a). This is in an area of essentially Sudanian vegetation, so we believe this to be a misidentification—this hornbill is restricted to the Guineo-Congolian forests and is absent from the Dahomey Gap. It is so vocal that

it would have been noticed in the forest remnants of southern Benin, were it to occur in the country.

**White-thighed Hornbill** *Bycanistes albotibialis* (-) and **Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill** *B. subcylindricus* (-)

Claffey (1995, based on an unpublished report by A. A. Green & J. A. Sayer) regards Brown-cheeked *Bycanistes cylindricus* as 'abundant', as opposed to 'rare' for the common Piping Hornbill *B. fistulator*. In mapping this record, Borrow & Demey (2001) assumed it to refer to the Lower Guinea endemic White-thighed Hornbill *B. albotibialis*, now considered a different species. Whether it is claimed to be this or the Upper Guinea endemic *B. cylindricus*, a hornbill of wet rain forest cannot possibly be 'abundant' in an area of essentially Sudanian woodland, and we have to assume there was confusion with another hornbill, probably Piping, which is common in the Ouari-Marou to Bétérou area. Similarly, doubt can be attached to the status of Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill, based on sightings by the same observers.

**Yellow-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna elata*

A. Kemp (*in* Fry *et al.* 1988) lists the species from Benin, but this is in error for Benin City, Mid-West State, Nigeria (Mason 1940).

**Yellow-spotted Barbet** *Buccanodon duchaillui*

Van den Akker (2003a) lists this species in the appendix to his Niaouli list without any details, even though it is quite unknown in Benin. This species' occurrence is most unlikely, and it appears to be absent from the Dahomey Gap (pers. obs.).

**Yellow-streaked Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus*

Listed from the Pendjari by Grell *et al.* (2005), this eastern African, montane forest species cannot possibly occur.

**Fire-crested Alethe** *Alethe diademata*

Claimed in March 1999 (JGoo *in* Bull. ABC 13: 99). No locality was given, but it was in Ouari Marou (P. M. Claffey *in litt.* 2008). Were this Guineo-Congolian forest species to occur in Benin, it would surely be in more suitable vegetation in the south. However, no-one has located it there, and the vagrant status of other forest Turdidae



such as Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush (see above) suggests that even the southern forests are too dry for this ant-following specialist.

**Red-pate Cisticola** *Cisticola ruficeps* (-)

Holyoak & Seddon (1990) reported seeing this species at 10°25'N 02°44'E (i.e. near Gamia). This Sahel species does not occur this far west in the Sudanian zone (Dowsett-Lemaire *et al.* 2005), and the species concerned was possibly Dorst's Cisticola *C. guinea*.

**Cassin's Flycatcher** *Muscicapa cassini*

Reported from the Ouémé River at Bétérou (Claffey 1995) and the Tapoa River in P.N. du 'W' (Crisler *et al.* 2003). This is a species of broad rivers in the Guineo-Congolian forest zone, and observations outside that area are either of Swamp Flycatcher *M. aquatica* or Ashy Flycatcher *M. caerulescens*. Its occurrence in P.N. du 'W' (Balança *et al.* 2007) is highly improbable.

**Dusky-blue Flycatcher** *Muscicapa comitata*

Reported from Toffo by Anciaux (1996), but the habitat (mango trees near habitation) (M.-R. Anciaux *in litt.* 2009) suggests that it was not this forest-associated species but some other small, grey flycatcher.

**Bioko Batis** *Batis poensis*

The specimen reportedly collected by Brunel (1958) at Bégon (Kétou region), and considered to require confirmation by Dowsett (1993), has disappeared from the MNHN (E. Pasquet *in litt.* 2009). As it came from a habitat described as 'savane arborée', it could have been a Senegal Batis *B. senegalensis*, which is widespread throughout the country. There is much degraded savanna between Kétou and Pobè (pers. obs.), and the observation of Bioko Batis on the edge of forest at Pobè mentioned by van den Akker & Claffey (2004) should not be accepted in the absence of a convincing description. Senegal Batis occurs on the edge of the forest zone at Lama, for example (pers. obs.). C. Erard (*in Urban et al.* 1997) cited Bégon for Bioko Batis, but does not recall seeing the specimen, and agrees that its presence in Benin remains unproven (C. Erard *in litt.* 2009). It is unknown from the whole of the Dahomey Gap, including from eastern Ghana (pers. obs.).

**Rufous-winged Illadopsis** *Illadopsis rufescens*

A bird mist-netted and photographed in Niaouli forest on 7 June 2001 (van den Akker 2003a) was not this species but Puvel's Illadopsis *I. puveli*. The colours are wrong for the richly rufous *I. rufescens*, which is completely absent from the dry forests of the Dahomey Gap, where it is replaced by *I. puveli*.

**Capuchin Babbler** *Phyllanthus atripennis* (-)

Dowsett (1993) included this species on the basis of the mention of 'Dahomey' by Bannerman (1953), but no supporting record has been traced. Subsequent reports lack confirmatory details (Delvingt *et al.* 1989, Claffey 1995).

**Violet-tailed Sunbird** *Anthreptes aurantium*

Recorded by Bouet (1914) at Agouagon and Savé. This claim is certainly erroneous as the species has not been recorded west of south-west Cameroon. A specimen claimed from Ondo (07°05'N 04°51'E), in southern Nigeria, was a misidentification of Western Violet-backed Sunbird *A. longuemarei* (Elgood 1982). This suggests that some other records in Bouet (1914) should also be treated with caution.

**Blue-throated Brown Sunbird** *Cyanomitra cyanolaema*

Based on a female from Adjacin (Oustalet 1898), but misidentified and not accepted by subsequent authorities.

**Johanna's Sunbird** *Cinnyris johannae*

The type locality of the race *fasciata* (Jardine & Fraser 1852) was said to be West Africa, and was restricted to Abomey by Shelley (1876: 199), on the basis that the whole collection referred to was 'chiefly' from that locality. Abomey is in Dahomey (i.e. Benin, not Nigeria, as in White 1963). However, the occurrence of this forest species in the savanna zone is inherently unlikely, and the specimen could have come from elsewhere in Upper Guinea.

**Western Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus brachyrhynchus*

Reported from Niaouli and Lama, but confused with Black-winged Oriole *O. nigripennis* by Waltert & Mühlenberg (1999) and van den Akker (2003a). Anciaux (1996) on the other



hand correctly listed only Black-winged Oriole for Niaouli, and Brunel (1958) found it 'assez commun' in forest, and collected several in the Pobè region; he failed to find Black-headed Oriole in the country. A specimen reported by Didier & Boudarel (1913) as *O. larvatus*, without locality, in the Waterlot collection, is also *O. nigripennis* (P. Boussès *in litt.* 2009); it is labelled '15 janvier 1910, Dahomey' like other specimens obtained by Waterlot, which suggests this may be the date they were consigned or assembled, and not necessarily collected then.

The characteristic disyllabic contact call of birds in Benin was tape-recorded at Niaouli, Lokoli and Pobè, as well as several song types. Individuals seen at close range many times, with or without playback, and always definitely identified as *O. nigripennis* (pers. obs.). Possibly Waltert & Mühlenberg confused the pale spot on the wing with the pale alula (present in *O. nigripennis*), but from their description of the voice, it is clear we are dealing with a single species. Western Black-headed Oriole is found in wetter, less disturbed forest in the Guineo-Congolian region.

#### **Sooty Boubou** *Laniarius leucorhynchus*

Reported from Niaouli by van den Akker (2003a), who wrote 'behaviour closer to that of a true shrike', but Sooty Boubous do not behave like true shrikes and seek the densest understorey near the ground. They are noisy however, singing in a duet. FDL listened for them and played pre-recorded tapes at Niaouli (plateau) without success. The occurrence of this Guineo-Congolian endemic in the P.N. de la Pendjari (Grell *et al.* 2005) is quite impossible.

#### **Black-crowned Waxbill** *Estrilda nonnula*

A sight record from Bétérou by Claffey (1995)—far from the nearest records in the montane grasslands of eastern Nigeria (Elgood *et al.* 1994)—is obviously an error of identification or concerned an escaped cagebird.

Although the status of birds in northern Benin will be dealt with at a later date, it should be mentioned here that the following species reported from 'W' and/or Pendjari-Arly National Parks (Balança *et al.* 2007) are certainly in error, regardless of which side of the international border they are supposed to occur: Afep Pigeon *Columba*

*unicincta*, Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*, Green-throated Sunbird *Chalcomitra rubescens*, Crimson Seedcracker *Pyrenestes sanguineus*, Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* and Variable Indigobird *Vidua funerea*.

#### **Species whose presence in Benin requires confirmation**

Another 28 species require confirmation, most of them because published details are insufficient to be sure of their identification, or in the absence of an indication as to which side of international borders they have been reported. Dowsett (1993) had accepted species listed from Pendjari-Arly (Benin / Burkina Faso), and most have indeed since been found to occur in Benin, the exceptions (including others listed by Grell *et al.* 2005) being included below. Species accepted in 1993 but now discounted are marked (-).

- Bouet (1914): Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*.
- Brunel (1958): Chestnut-capped Flycatcher *Erythrocerus mccallii*.
- Dowsett (1993): Common Teal *Anas crecca* (-), Secretary Bird *Sagittarius serpentarius* (-), Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (-), Quail-plover *Ortyxelos meiffrenii* (-), Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* (-).
- Claffey (1995): White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Magpie Mannikin *Spermestes fringilloides*.
- Dodman & Taylor (1996): Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*.
- Claffey (1999b): Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis*.
- Claffey (2003): Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis*.
- van den Akker (2003a): Cassin's Honeybird *Prodotiscus insignis*, Violet-backed Hyliota *Hyliota violacea*, Ussher's Flycatcher *Muscicapa ussheri*, White-breasted Negrofinch *Nigrita fusconotus*.
- Grell *et al.* (2005), Balança *et al.* (2007): Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*, Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*, Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, European Scops Owl *Otus scops*, European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (-), Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* (-), Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (-), Western



Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli*, Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, Neumann's (Red-winged) Starling *Onychognathus (morio) neumanni*, Yellow-winged Pytilia *Pytilia hypogrammica* (-).

## Conclusion

This paper adds 74 species to the Benin list and lists another 58 whose records have been published between 1993 and the present. Together with species accepted on the list of Dowsett (1993), including those listed from a transfrontier park and since confirmed, we now accept a total of 542 species from Benin. As, in our opinion, no fewer than 56 claimed species should be rejected or require confirmation, much remains to be clarified regarding the status and distribution of birds in the country. We hope to present a detailed synthesis in a few years time, when further field work has been completed, especially in the little-known northern half of Benin. A description of study sites and an annotated list of the 336 species observed by FDL and RJD in 2009 in south-central Benin is available as a pdf (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2009) on request, as is a report on the 253 species found in the northern national parks, 'W' and Pendjari (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2010). It is hoped both will eventually be posted on the ABC website.

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## Appendix 1. Coordinates of Benin localities mentioned

Abomey	07°11'N 01°59'E
Adjacin	06°29'N 02°35'E
Agbassa	08°49'N 02°17'E
Agouagon near the Ouémé River	07°59'N 02°18'E
Agoué	06°16'N 01°13'E
Batia	10°54'N 01°30'E
Bégon	07°17'N 02°29'E
Bembéréké	10°13'N 02°40'E
Bétérou	09°12'N 02°16'E
Bodjécali	11°51'N 03°22'E
Bouches du Roi	06°17'N 01°56'E
Boukoubé	10°11'N 01°06'E
Campement des Eléphants, P.N. de la Pendjari	11°16'N 01°16'E
Chutes de Koudou, P.N. du 'W'	11°39'N 02°15'E
Cobly	10°29'N 01°01'E
Cotonou	06°21'N 02°26'E
Datori	10°24'N 00°47'E
Didani	10°29'N 00°59'E
Djougou	09°42'N 01°40'E
Forêt Classée de l'Ouémé Supérieur	c.09°25'N 02°15'E
Forêt Classée de la Lama	06°59'N 02°07'E
Gamia	10°24'N 02°44'E
Grand-Popo	06°16'N 01°50'E
Guézin	06°24'N 01°57'E
Karimama	12°04'N 03°11'E
Kofouno	12°00'N 03°05'E
Kountori, Atacora	10°24'N 00°57'E
lac Ahémé	06°23'N 01°56'E
lac Nokoué	06°29'N 02°25'E
Malanville	11°52'N 03°23'E
Mare 25, P.N. du 'W'	11°54'N 02°56'E
Mare Bali, P.N. de la Pendjari	11°12'N 01°31'E
Mare Fogou, P.N. de la Pendjari	11°26'N 01°35'E
Mare Sacrée, P.N. de la Pendjari	11°28'N 01°28'E
Mare Tiabiga, P.N. de la Pendjari	11°25'N 01°43'E
Mékrou outfall	12°24'N 02°49'E
Mékrou Tounga, Monsey district	c.12°25'N 02°50'E
Monts Kouffé	08°43'N 01°51'E
Nanakadé	10°26'N 00°53'E
Natitingou, plateau Somba	10°19'N 01°22'E
Niaouli plateau forest	06°44'N 02°08'E
Nikki	09°56'N 03°12'E
Ouidah lagoon	06°20'N 02°05'E
Plaine du Sô	06°30'N 02°23'E
Pobè	06°58'N 02°40'E
Point Triple, P.N. du 'W'	11°54'N 02°24'E
Porga	11°03'N 00°58'E
Sakété	06°43'N 02°40'E
Savé	08°02'N 02°29'E
Sota outfall	11°52'N 03°23'E
Tanguéta	10°37'N 01°16'E
Toffo	06°51'N 02°05'E
Zimvo (Zinvié)	06°37'N 02°21'E
zone de chasse de la Mékrou	11°20'N 02°02'E



# Notes on the structure and plumage of Beesley's Lark

## *Chersomanes [albofasciata] beesleyi*

Paul F. Donald<sup>a</sup> and Nigel J. Collar<sup>b</sup>

**Notes sur la structure et le plumage de l'Alouette de Beesley *Chersomanes [albofasciata] beesleyi*.** L'Alouette de Beesley *Chersomanes [albofasciata] beesleyi*, un taxon très rare et en diminution, confiné au nord de la Tanzanie, a été séparée de l'Alouette éperonnée *C. albofasciata*, qui se trouve principalement en Afrique australe, dans le *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, Vol. 9 (2004). Ce traitement est basé sur des différences génétiques non publiées, un dimorphisme sexuel plus marqué, une poitrine plus fortement striée, un comportement différent (hochements de queue) et une taille plus petite. Nous avons examiné cinq spécimens (quatre mâles, une femelle) de *beesleyi* et un grand nombre des différentes sous-espèces de *C. albofasciata* d'Afrique australe. Les stries sur la poitrine sont toujours bien marquées chez *beesleyi*, mais c'est un caractère qu'on retrouve chez certains individus des races australes, surtout dans le nord. La taille de *beesleyi* est certes petite, mais il y a chevauchement de tous les caractères mesurés avec ceux de *C. albofasciata*. En plus, les hochements de queue ont été observés chez *C. albofasciata*. Nous recommandons une évaluation plus sérieuse du statut de la forme *beesleyi* mais suggérons que, quoiqu'en soit le résultat, la conservation de ce taxon biogéographiquement intéressant et fortement menacé doit être prioritaire.

**Summary.** Beesley's Lark *Chersomanes [albofasciata] beesleyi*, a very rare and declining taxon confined to northern Tanzania, was separated in Vol. 9 of *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (2004) from the largely southern African Spike-heeled Lark *C. albofasciata* on account of unpublished genetic differences, a higher degree of sexual dimorphism, heavier breast streaking, different behaviour (tail-cocking) and smaller size. We examined five specimens (four male, one female) of *beesleyi* and many more of various races of *C. albofasciata* from across southern Africa. Breast streaking was consistently marked in *beesleyi* but matched in some instances by southern African taxa, particularly in the northern part of that range, while size was small but within the overall range of *albofasciata* in all of the characters measured. Moreover, tail-cocking has been recorded in *albofasciata*. We urge fuller assessment of the status of *beesleyi* but suggest that, whatever the outcome, the conservation of this biogeographically interesting and highly threatened taxon merits high priority.

**S**pike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* is largely confined to southern Africa, from Angola and Botswana south through Namibia to the Cape. The species is variable in size and plumage, and many subspecies have been proposed—up to 16 in Clancey (1980)—although this number was reduced to ten in *Birds of Africa* (Keith *et al.* 1992). The same ten subspecific divisions were followed by *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (HBW; de Juana *et al.* 2004) and *Roberts* (Hockey *et al.* 2005). There is a single specimen record (omitted from *Birds of Africa* but included in HBW), a bird collected from the Kundelungu plateau in Congo-Kinshasa, currently unassigned to subspecies (Schouteden 1969, Lippens & Wille 1976), and a debated sight record from Amboseli, Kenya (HBW; Turner 1985). The various subspecies range from dark-backed races with rich rufous-brown underparts and ear-coverts, such as *C. a. obscurata* of Angola,

to pale-backed races that have the underparts only faintly suffused pale buff, such as *C. a. kalahariae* of southern Botswana (Fig. 1). Such conspicuous variation in plumage tones within a relatively small area is not unusual in certain larks, which respond to local variation in the colour of the substrate they occupy (HBW). *Roberts* notes that Spike-heeled Lark 'exhibits considerable fine-scale geographic variation in plumage colouration linked to soil colour and vegetation density', that differences among many contiguous subspecies are 'broadly clinal' and that more study might further reduce the number of recognised subspecies.

On 2 November 1965, J. S. S. Beesley collected a lark from the Masai Plains (Angyata Osugat), some 40 km north of Arusha, northern Tanzania, nearly 2,000 km outside what was then the known range of Spike-heeled Lark. The specimen was described by Benson (1966) as a new subspecies, *Chersomanes albofasciata beesleyi*,





**Figure 1.** Range of upperpart coloration in *Chersomanes* larks. From left: *C. albofasciata kalahariae*, *C. a. alticola*, *C. a. bradfieldi*, *C. [a.] beesleyi* (type specimen) and *C. a. obscurata* (P. F. Donald, © Natural History Museum)

Variations dans la couleur des parties supérieures chez les alouettes du genre *Chersomanes*. De gauche à droite : *C. albofasciata kalahariae*, *C. a. alticola*, *C. a. bradfieldi*, *C. [a.] beesleyi* (spécimen type) et *C. a. obscurata* (P. F. Donald, © Natural History Museum)

in honour of its discoverer. In his description, Benson noted ‘upperside most similar to *C. a. obscurata* (Hartert), but much less dark, blackish-brown rather than near jet-black . . . nape and margins on crown whitish rather than reddish, the uppertail coverts slightly paler red. On underside, dusky streaking on chest more pronounced than in any other subspecies; in tone of russet on lower chest to abdomen much paler than *obscurata*, nearest to *C. a. kalahariae* (Ogilvie-Grant) and *erikssoni* (Hartert).’ Benson further noted that his specimen ‘seems also to be unusually small (wing 80 mm only), White (1961) giving the wing-length of the male of two other subspecies, *obscurata* and *C. a. boweni* (de Schauensee), as respectively 81–89 and 81–91 mm’. This furnished the basis of the form’s description in *Birds of Africa*, in which *C. a. beesleyi* was retained as a subspecies.

However, the account of the family Alaudidae in *HBW* elevated *beesleyi* to a full species, Beesley’s Lark *C. beesleyi*, an arrangement also adopted by at least one field guide (Sinclair & Ryan 2003) and one world checklist (Clements 2007). The rationale for treating *beesleyi* as a full species was given in *HBW* as (1) hitherto unpublished work showing it to be genetically distinct from *C. albofasciata*, (2) a degree of sexual plumage dimorphism (not apparently shown in other races

of *C. albofasciata*), females being ‘more richly rufous on belly’ and having ‘fewer, bolder breast streaks’, (3) heavier breast streaking, (4) different behaviour and (5) smaller size. The last of these characters is reflected in the alternative common name given in *HBW*, ‘Pygmy Spike-heeled Lark’ although, as *HBW* was the first authority to separate *beesleyi* as a species, it is unclear where this name was previously used. Almost immediately, doubts were expressed about the validity of elevating *beesleyi* to species level (Irwin 2005) and BirdLife International continues to recognise *beesleyi* as a subspecies of Spike-heeled Lark, so the form is not listed separately on the IUCN Red List. Careful assessment of the taxonomic status of *beesleyi* is important because it is extremely rare, occupies a very small range (confined to the ‘Longido Game Controlled Area’: Baker & Baker 2002), and is apparently declining in numbers, making it one of Africa’s most threatened bird taxa (*HBW*); yet nothing so far has been published that quantifies and / or verifies the characters itemised in *HBW* as supporting its specific status.

### Specimen evidence

We examined specimens of *Chersomanes* larks in the Natural History Museum (NHM), Tring, UK. Only five skins of *beesleyi* were available to us, four males (including the type) and a female; those specimens other than the type were collected by A. D. Forbes-Watson in April 1966. Larger numbers of specimens of most subspecies of Spike-heeled Lark recognised by *Birds of Africa* and *HBW* were available for comparison. Of the five characters listed in *HBW* for regarding *beesleyi* specifically, we comment on three. The genetic work is currently unpublished, and the presence of only a single female *beesleyi* in NHM made quantitative assessment of sexual plumage dimorphism impossible, although this bird did not appear to differ greatly in breast streaking or underpart coloration from the males (Fig. 2).

**Breast streaking.**—Benson (1960) correctly pointed out that *beesleyi* shows more pronounced breast streaking than any other subspecies, and this is given as a salient feature in *HBW*. All five specimens of *beesleyi* in the NHM show clear breast streaking, which is generally less obvious or completely absent in specimens of the southern races of *C. albofasciata* examined. However, variation is high and individuals of





**Figure 2.** Underparts of the five specimens of *Chersomanes [albofasciata] beesleyi* in the Natural History Museum (Tring), four males on left, single female on the right (P. F. Donald, © Natural History Museum)

Parties inférieures de cinq spécimens de *Chersomanes [albofasciata] beesleyi* du Natural History Museum (Tring), à gauche quatre mâles, à droite une femelle (P. F. Donald, © Natural History Museum)



**Figure 3.** Range of breast streaking in *Chersomanes* larks. The left-hand two birds are *C. [albofasciata] beesleyi* showing the least and most heavily streaked birds of the five available, then the most heavily streaked examples in the collection of NHM (Tring) of *C. a. kalahariae*, *C. a. alticola* and *C. a. obscurata* (P. F. Donald, © Natural History Museum)

Variations dans l'importance des stries sur la poitrine des alouettes du genre *Chersomanes*. Les deux oiseaux à gauche sont *C. [albofasciata] beesleyi* avec le moins et le plus de stries des cinq spécimens présents, suivis des exemplaires les plus striés de la collection du NHM (Tring) de *C. a. kalahariae*, *C. a. alticola* et *C. a. obscurata* (P. F. Donald, © Natural History Museum)

some subspecies, such as *C. a. alticola*, *C. a. kalahariae* and *C. a. obscurata*, can occasionally exhibit breast streaking comparable in extent



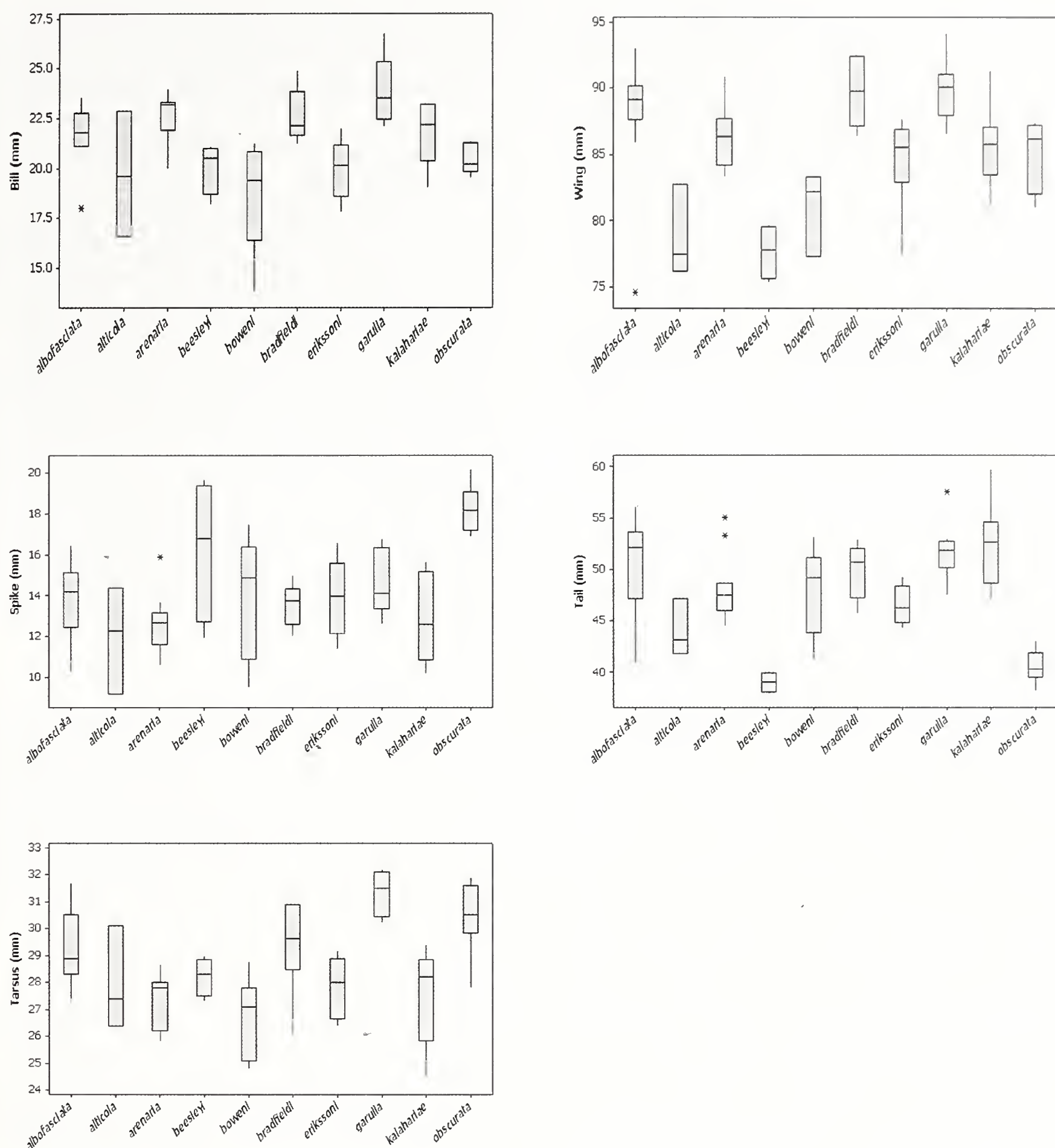
**Figure 4.** Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata*, Etosha National Park, Namibia, December 2010, presumed to be of the race *boweni*, showing prominent breast streaking (P. F. Donald)

Alouette éperonnée *Chersomanes albofasciata*, présumée de la sous-espèce *boweni*, ayant des stries bien marquées sur la poitrine, Parc National d'Étosha, Namibie, décembre 2010 (P. F. Donald)

to that of *beesleyi* (Fig. 3). In December 2010, PFD observed a number of Spike-heeled Larks, presumably of the race *boweni*, in Etosha National Park, northern Namibia, and recorded prominent breast streaking in several of them (Fig. 4). These more heavily streaked races are among the more northerly of the southern African populations, suggesting that the degree of breast streaking might be related to latitude: while breast streaking is most frequent and pronounced in *beesleyi*, it is certainly not unique to this form and may be clinal. If, as seems likely, *beesleyi* represents a relic from a time when *C. albofasciata* or its ancestors were more widespread in Africa, originally clinal variation in a feature like breast streaking might misleadingly appear, with the disappearance of the intermediate forms, as a step change.

**Size.**—Benson (1960) again correctly pointed out that *beesleyi* is small, noting that the type is smaller than *C. a. obscurata* and *C. a. boweni*. With only four male *beesleyi* specimens available, and equally small sample sizes for several other taxa, statistical testing of differences in size was not appropriate. Nevertheless, visual plots of the measurements taken provide no evidence that *beesleyi* falls outside the size range of *C. albofasciata* (Fig. 5). In all measurements (bill to skull, wing-chord, tarsus, tail and the length of the spike on the hindclaw, all measured with dial callipers to 0.1 mm by PFD), *beesleyi* overlaps one or more





**Figure 5.** Boxplots of measurements of nine subspecies of Spike-heeled Larks *Chersomanes albofasciata* and *C. [a.] beesleyi* of northern Tanzania, arranged alphabetically. Only males were included because of significant sexual size dimorphism. All measurements are in mm. The horizontal line in each box represents the median, the box itself represents the interquartile range, the 'whiskers' the highest and lowest data values within the upper and lower limits, and the asterisks outliers. Sample sizes are 12 (*albofasciata*), 3 (*alticola*), 11 (*arenaria*), 4 (*beesleyi*), 7 (*boweni*), 6 (*bradfieldi*), 8 (*erikssoni*), 8 (*garulla*), 9 (*kalahariae*) and 6 (*obscurata*), respectively.

Mensurations de neuf sous-espèces de l'Alouette éperonnée *Chersomanes albofasciata* et de *C. [a.] beesleyi* du nord de la Tanzanie, par ordre alphabétique. Seules des mâles ont été utilisés à cause du dimorphisme sexuel prononcé de la taille. Toutes les mensurations sont en mm. La ligne horizontale dans chaque bloc représente la valeur médiane, le bloc lui-même représente l'écart interquartile, les lignes les valeurs les plus hautes et les plus basses dans les limites supérieures et inférieures, et les astérisques les valeurs hors normes. Nombre d'échantillons : 12 (*albofasciata*), 3 (*alticola*), 11 (*arenaria*), 4 (*beesleyi*), 7 (*boweni*), 6 (*bradfieldi*), 8 (*erikssoni*), 8 (*garulla*), 9 (*kalahariae*) et 6 (*obscurata*), respectivement.



of the southern races of *C. albofasciata* or falls entirely within the overall range of that species. Bill length and tarsus length of *beesleyi* fall towards the centre of the range of variation shown by the southern subspecies of *C. albofasciata*. Wing length of *beesleyi* is similar to that of *C. a. alticola* (north-east South Africa) and overlaps with *C. a. boweni* (north-west Namibia and Angola) and *C. a. erikssoni* (north-east Namibia and Angola). The hindclaw spike length of *beesleyi* falls towards the upper end of variation in *Chersomanes* larks, although spike length is a character known to vary with the nature of the preferred vegetation (Green *et al.* 2009) and therefore may not be a useful taxonomic feature. Only on tail length does *beesleyi* stand out as being particularly small, but even this character overlaps with *C. a. obscurata*. In bill, tail and spike length, *beesleyi* is most similar to *C. a. obscurata*, the most northerly of the southern subspecies of *C. albofasciata* and the closest geographically to *beesleyi*.

While *beesleyi* is clearly not uniquely small in the range of variation exhibited by *C. albofasciata*, it certainly falls towards the lower end of the range of sizes exhibited, particularly in tail length. Such a pattern would be expected under Bergmann's Rule, which states that intraspecific body size increases with latitude, probably as a response to decreasing temperatures. Bergmann's Rule has considerable empirical support (e.g., Ashton 2002) and would predict that *beesleyi* should fall towards the lower end of the variation in size. Body size, therefore, does not necessarily lend support to the specific treatment of *beesleyi* since other reasons for its variation are possible.

**Behaviour.**—Claimed differences in behaviour between *beesleyi* and southern forms of *C. albofasciata* appear to be limited to tail-cocking, reported to be frequent in *beesleyi* and absent in all forms of *C. albofasciata* (HBW). However, these differences have not been quantified nor have any details been published, and *C. albofasciata* does at least occasionally cock its tail, particularly during sexual display (C. N. Spottiswoode *in litt.* 2009). Until field studies have been undertaken to quantify any difference, it should perhaps best be disregarded in assessments of the taxonomic status of *beesleyi*.

## Conclusion

The rationale for elevating *beesleyi* to specific status therefore appears to require a more thorough presentation of the evidence. This should include an assessment of variation in songs and calls (HBW suggests that these are at least similar to those of Spike-heeled Lark), detailed behavioural observations and published estimates of genetic distances between *beesleyi* and all of the various races—especially *obscurata*—of *C. albofasciata* (although genetic distance alone may be deemed insufficient to diagnose specific status: Tobias *et al.* 2010). Whatever the outcome, every effort should be made to conserve the small and highly threatened population of *beesleyi* in northern Tanzania, since it unquestionably represents a distinctive and biogeographically interesting taxon (although it is also worth mentioning that renewed surveys in adjacent areas may produce new populations, as the region is generally poorly known ornithologically: M. P. S. Irwin *in litt.* 2010).

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# The Endangered Braun's Bushshrike *Laniarius brauni*: a summary

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**O picanço de Braun *Laniarius brauni*, espécie 'Em Perigo': uma síntese.** O picanço de Braun *Laniarius brauni* é uma espécie 'Em Perigo' (Lista Vermelha das Espécies Ameaçadas) que apenas ocorre no norte de Angola, numa área inferior a 5.000 km<sup>2</sup>. Aqui revemos a literatura disponível sobre esta espécie, sintetizamos a informação sobre os espécimes conhecidos e apresentamos dados sobre as nossas observações originais. Com estes dados inferimos uma área de ocorrência de 3.500 km<sup>2</sup> e estimamos o tamanho da população em 3.500–7.000 indivíduos adultos (assumindo uma densidade de 1–2 indivíduos/ km<sup>2</sup>). A única estimativa prévia de 498–996 indivíduos adultos baseou-se numa estimativa incorrecta da área de ocorrência. Apesar de ser mais abundante do que se estimava, esta espécie ainda preenche os critérios para a categoria 'Em Perigo' devido à sua distribuição restrita. É provável que a sua área de distribuição seja maior, mas recomendamos que se mantenha a classificação 'Em Perigo' até que sejam obtidos dados que comprovem esta suposição. Esta espécie não existe em nenhuma área protegida, mas parece tolerar alguma perturbação visto mostrar preferência por floresta secundária e bordas de floresta a 600–870 m de altitude. Finalmente, descrevemos em detalhe as vocalizações desta espécie e discutimos a literatura sobre a sua posição sistemática.

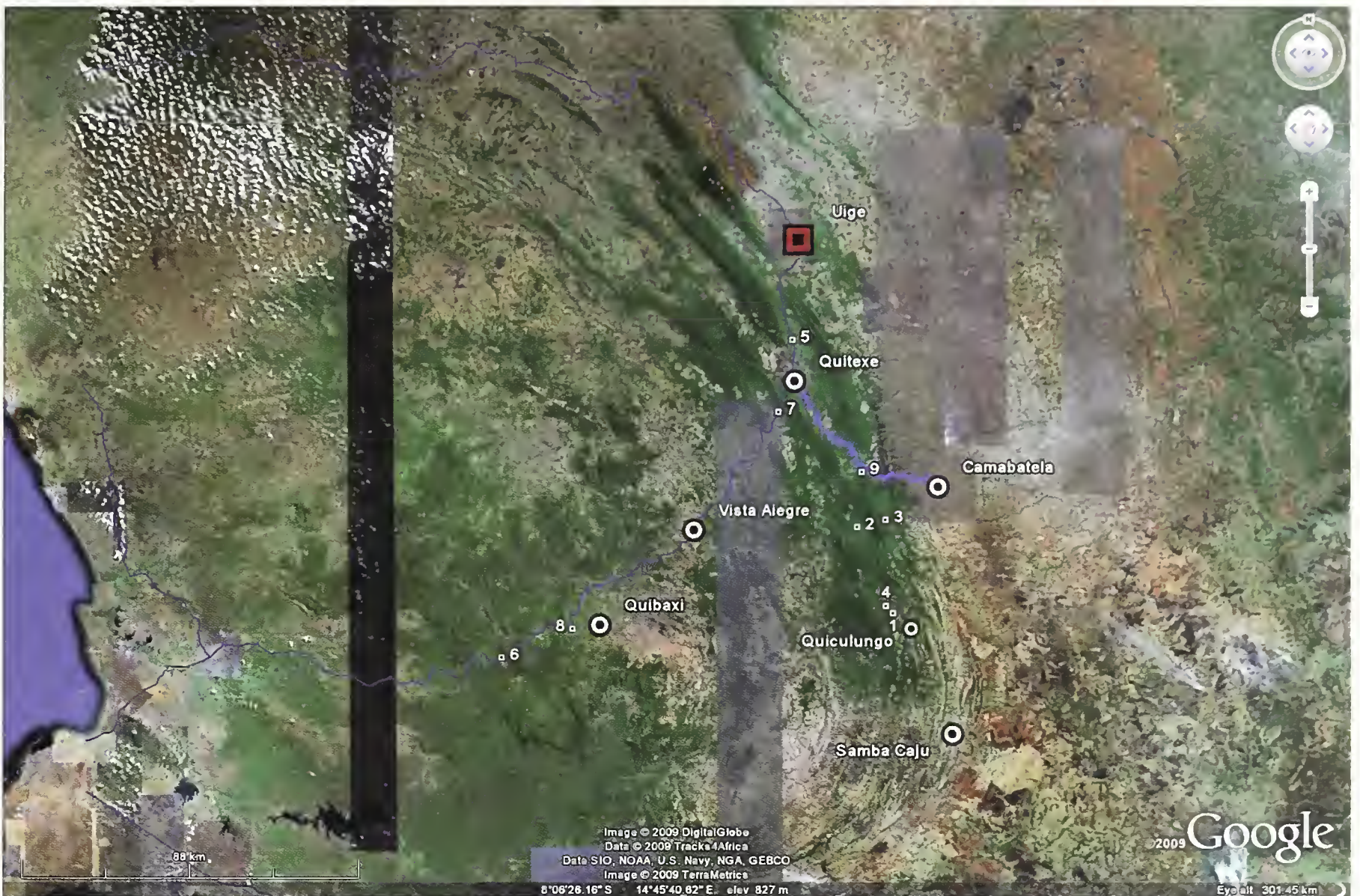
**Summary:** The Endangered Braun's Bushshrike *Laniarius brauni* is restricted to an area of less than 5,000 km<sup>2</sup> in northern Angola. We review previous literature on this species, summarise information on specimens and provide details of our own unpublished records. From this we calculate a range size of 3,500 km<sup>2</sup> and, based on the assumption of a mean density of 1–2 individuals/km<sup>2</sup>, calculate a population size of 3,500–7,000 mature individuals. The only previous population size of 498–996 individuals was based on an erroneous range size. Despite being more numerous than previously estimated, and potentially more widespread, it still meets criteria for Endangered status based on range size. We recommend that it retains Endangered status pending the collection of further field data. The species does not occur in any conservation area, although it is perhaps tolerant of some habitat disturbance, favouring secondary forest and forest edge at 600–870 m. Finally, we describe in greater detail its vocalisations and discuss its systematic treatment in the literature.

**T**he Endangered Braun's Bushshrike *Laniarius brauni* has a range of <5,000 km<sup>2</sup>, limited to Cuanza Norte and Uíge provinces in northern Angola (Fry & Keith 2000, BirdLife International 2008, Fry 2009). Owing to its restricted distribution, even tiny errors in reported localities can distort accurate estimation of range size. Several inaccuracies and unsubstantiated claims exist in the literature, and are outlined below. Here we summarise fully details of specimens and review previous literature on the species, providing locality data as accurately as possible. We also present new and precise information from our own field observations. Finally, we provide a fuller description of the species' vocalisations, which were described only briefly by Heinrich (1958) and Sinclair *et al.* (2007), and discuss its systematic treatment.

## Collection localities and recent sightings

Braun's Bushshrike was first collected on 17 April 1936 near Quiculungo (08°31'S 15°19'E; c.800 m; also Quiculungo or Quicolungo; see Fig. 1) by Rudolf H. Braun. The specimen was sent to the Berlin Museum, where Erwin Stresemann tentatively described it as the male of Gabela Bushshrike *L. [luehderi] amboimensis*, then known only from a female specimen (Stresemann 1937). In 1939 Braun collected four additional specimens at Quiculungo, including females, and Stresemann soon realised his error. He invited David Bannerman to describe the new taxon, based on these four new specimens, two males and two females (Bannerman 1939). These four specimens, but not that collected in 1936, were sent to the British Museum and are still housed there (see Table 1). Bannerman (1939) described the new subspecies *Laniarius*





**Figure 1.** A Google Earth (2009) image of record localities (small squares) and important towns (circles) within the range of Braun's Bushshrike *Laniarius brauni*. Most records are from a distinctive area of forest habitats running *c.* 150 km north–south, from *c.* 40 km north-west of Uíge to *c.* 20 km south of Quiculungo. From Vista Alegre westwards is another block of forest, although much of this lies below 600 m, the lower altitudinal limit of Braun's Bushshrike. Localities: 1 = type locality, 6 km north-west of Quiculungo; 2 = Roça Canzele; 3 = 15 km south-west of Camabatela; 4 = Bolongongo; 5 = 30 km south of Uíge; 6 = Dembos forest; 7 = 20 km south of Quitexe; 8 = 7 km west of Quibaxi; 9 = rio Dange. Blue and purple lines indicate roads.

**Figura 1.** Uma imagem do Google Earth (2009) com as localidades de registo (quadrados) e povoações importantes (círculos) na área de distribuição do picanço de Braun *Laniarius brauni*. A maior parte dos registos provêm de um tipo de floresta distinto que se estende na direcção norte-sul ao longo de cerca de 150 km, a partir de cerca de 40 km a noroeste de Uíge até cerca de 20 km a sul de Quiculungo. De Vista Alegre para oeste existe outro bloco de floresta, mas a maior parte encontra-se abaixo dos 600 m, a altitude mínima a que ocorre o picanço de Braun. Localidades: 1 = localidade tipo, 6 km a noroeste de Quiculungo; 2 = Roça Canzele; 3 = 15 km a sudoeste de Camabatela; 4 = Bolongongo; 5 = 30 km a sul de Uíge; 6 = floresta de Dembos; 7 = 20 km a sul de Quitexe; 8 = 7 km a oeste de Quibaxi; 9 = rio Dange. Linhas azuis e roxas indicam estradas.

*luehderi brauni*, for its collector Braun. It should be noted that the locality details in the type description, 'Quicolungo, Angola, circa 09°50'S 15°20'E, south of the Cuanza River' (Bannerman 1939) match those given by Sick (1934) and are erroneous; Stresemann (1937) corrected Sick's (1934) error to 08°29'S 15°16'E, but Bannerman (1939) overlooked this (Traylor 1962). This locality is *c.* 6 km north-west of Quiculungo town, and just 2–3 km south-east of Bolongongo (08°28'S 15°15'E).

Braun collected another specimen in 1945 and two more in 1946. Then, in 1954–57, Gerd

Heinrich collected a series of 13 specimens, bringing the total to 21 (Table 1). The last record of the species in the 20th century was in November 1957. Extraordinarily, based on the specimens we have traced and a thorough review of the literature (Dean 2000; W. R. J. Dean unpubl. data), prior to 2005 the species was known from the records of just two people, Braun and Heinrich. In addition to the type locality, specimens were taken at (based on information in museum catalogues):

- rio Dange: 08°09'S 15°12'E, 810 m, *c.* 20 km west of Camabatela (08°12'S 15°22'E);



**Table 1.** A chronological list of the 21 specimens of Braun's Bushshrike *Laniarius brauni* we have traced. All are of adult specimens. Locality data is given according to the relevant museum catalogues in inverted commas, followed by the locality name we use. Museum abbreviations as follows: AMNH = American Museum of Natural History, New York; BMNH = British Museum of Natural History (now The Natural History Museum), Tring; FMNH = Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; NMNH = Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC; YPM = Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, New Haven; ZMB = Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin; ZMH = Zoologisches Museum Hamburg.

**Tabela 1.** Uma lista cronológica dos 21 espécimes de picanço de Braun *Laniarius brauni* que conseguimos localizar. Todos os espécimes são de adultos. O nome da localidade dada por cada museu está entre aspas e é seguido do nome da localidade dado por nós. As abreviações dos nomes de museus são: AMNH = American Museum of Natural History, New York; BMNH = British Museum of Natural History (actualmente: The Natural History Museum), Tring; FMNH = Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; NMNH = Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC; YPM = Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, New Haven; ZMB = Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin; ZMH = Zoologisches Museum Hamburg.

Date collected / Data da colheita	Collector / Colector	Museum / Museu	Specimen no./ Espécime nº	Location / Localidade	Sex
17 April 1936	Braun	ZMB	36.1061	'Quicolungo'; 6 km north-west of Quiculungo	M
*11 April 1939	Braun	BMNH	1939.8.4.1	'Quicolungo, Angola; -8.45/15.28'; 6 km north-west of Quiculungo	M
22 March 1939	Braun	BMNH	1940.12.2.13	'Quicolungo, Angola; -8.45/15.28'; 6 km north-west of Quiculungo	F
1 April 1939	Braun	BMNH	1940.12.2.14	'Quicolungo, Angola; -8.45/15.28'; 6 km north-west of Quiculungo	F
23 April 1939	Braun	BMNH	1940.12.2.12	'Quicolungo, Angola; -8.45/15.28'; 6 km north-west of Quiculungo	M
4 May 1945	Braun	ZMB	49.25	'Roça Alto Dange'; assumed to be Dange River	F
27 November 1946	Braun	AMNH	344028	'Camabatela, Dange River'; Dange River	M
29 November 1946	Braun	AMNH	344027	'Camabatela, Dange River'; Dange River	M
6 April 1954	Heinrich	FMNH	221265	'Canzele, 30 km W Camabatela'; Roça Canzele	M
**6 May 1954	Heinrich	FMNH	221264	'Canzele, 30 km W Camabatela'; Roça Canzele	M
**6 May 1954	Heinrich	AMNH	800773	'Cantele, Qual Sul R.'; Roça Canzele	M
27 March 1955	Heinrich	ZMH	58.500	'N-Angola, 15 km S v. Camabatela'; 15 km south-west of Camabatela	F
27 March 1955	Heinrich	ZMH	58.501	'N-Angola, 15 km S v. Camabatela'; 15 km south-west of Camabatela	F
30 March 1955	Heinrich	FMNH	225389	'Camabatela, 15 km SW'; 15 km south-west of Camabatela	M
1 April 1955	Heinrich	FMNH	225390	'Camabatela, 15 km SW'; 15 km south-west of Camabatela	F
1 April 1955	Heinrich	ZMH	58.499	'N-Angola, 15km S v. Camabatela'; 15 km south-west of Camabatela	M
17 September 1957	Heinrich	NMNH	583410	'Roca Canzele, North of Quiculungo, 600 m'; Roça Canzele	M
21 October 1957	Heinrich	NMNH	583411	'Roca Canzele, North of Quiculungo, 700 m'; Roça Canzele	M
21 October 1957	Heinrich	NMNH	583412	'Roca Canzele, North of Quiculungo, 700 m'; Roça Canzele	F
28 October 1957	Heinrich	YPM	YPM 95206	'Cuanza Norte Province. Elev. 1969 feet, -8.467 15.267'; Bolongongo	F
30 October 1957	Heinrich	YPM	YPM 95205	'Cuanza Norte Province. Elev. 1969 feet, -8.467 15.267'; Bolongongo	M
16 November 1957	Heinrich	NMNH	583413	'Bolongongo, North of Quiculungo, 700 m'; Bolongongo	M

\*the type specimen

\*\* refers to the same specimen, first sent to the FMNH and later exchanged with AMNH

- Roça Canzele: 08°17'S 15°11'E, 870 m (Dean 2000), c.25 km north of Quiculungo, 27 km west of Camabatela and 9 km south-west of the rio Dange; sometimes spelt Cantele or Canzela;
- 15 km south-west of Camabatela: c.08°16'S 15°15'E, 830 m, and c.7.5 km east of Roça Canzele; and
- Bolongongo: 08°28'S 15°15'E, 870 m, just 2 3 km west of the type locality.

We have assumed, based on its name, that Roça Alto Dange (see Table 1) must be on the Dange River and hence treat the locality as the rio Dange, from where there are two other

specimens. These are the only specimen localities, despite Camabatela being listed as a known locality by Dean (2000) and Fry (2009). This is particularly important because Camabatela is located in grassland and open woodland, with no suitable habitat for Braun's Bushshrike within 10 km of the town.

In addition, Chapin (1954) reported the species from Quibaxi (08°30'S 14°35'E) to Camabatela, citing Rudolf Braun (pers. comm.) but provided no supporting evidence. Pinto (1960) also mentions that it occurs in the Dembos area (a municipality based on Quibaxi; also Quibaxe), but no source is given. It should be noted, however, that we have now recorded the species from Quibaxi



(details below). Finally, Dean (2001) mentions a possible record of Braun's Bushshrike from near Dondo (09°41'S 14°25'E), based on the presumed misidentification of an out-of-range report of Crimson-breasted Shrike *L. atrococcineus* from nearby Bom Jesus (09°10'S 13°34'E, 50 m) in Günther & Feiler (1986). Because the observers did not mention the possibility of the record belonging to Braun's Bushshrike, and the record comes from 160 km south of Braun's Bushshrike's known range and well below its known elevational range (which is 600–870 m), this record can safely be assumed not to refer to Braun's Bushshrike. Consequently, the suggestion that it occurs in Kissama National Park (Dean 2001, BirdLife International 2008) no longer holds; the species does not occur in any conservation unit.

Then, in January 2005, Braun's Bushshrike was found for the first time in 48 years along the main road south of Uíge town, Uíge province, in degraded forest (Sinclair *et al.* 2007). This locality has been reported as both '30 km south of Uíge' (I. Sinclair *et al.* in *Bull. ABC* 12: 177) and 'the approach to Uíge town', '40–60 km north-east of the type locality' (Sinclair *et al.* 2007). The correct locality is c.30 km south of Uíge town and 5–10 km north of Quitexe (07°56'S 15°02'E; PVP pers. obs.) at c.07°51'S 15°02'E (680 m); this is c.80 km north-west of the type locality. The next available sightings, in November 2005, were by NB & PVP from Dembos forest at 08°35'S 14°21'E, 650 m, c.100 km south-west of Quitexe, Cuanza Norte province, extending the known range significantly, if the reports by Chapin (1954) and Pinto (1960) are discounted. Finally, in August 2009 MSLM & MM spent three days in forests in the Bolongongo and Quiculungo areas, and driving from Camabatela west to Quitexe, passing within 10 km of Roça Canzele. No Braun's Bushshrikes were found in this region, despite use of playback of the very similar Luehder's Bushshrike *Laniarius luehderi* vocalisations (see Vocalisations). However, four pairs were quickly found 20 km south of Quitexe at 08°01'S 15°00'E (790 m), also in degraded forest, and a single bird was heard c.7 km west of Quibaxi at 08°31'S 14°31'E (780 m). To our knowledge, these are the only records other than the specimens discussed above. The species' altitudinal range has been stated as 600–1,265 m (Fry 2009). We are unable to trace the source of

this information, and all records mentioned herein are from 600–870 m, which should be regarded as the species' altitudinal range until further data become available.

### Habitat, range, population size and threat status

Although Braun's Bushshrike is typically regarded as a forest species, Heinrich (1958) described its favoured habitat as densely overgrown, liana-rich gallery forest, and thickets at the edges of clearings in more extensive forest. He concluded that it shunned the interior of primary forest. Our records agree with this and the reports in Traylor (1962; no source is given), with all of our sightings being from secondary forest or forest edge, although we surveyed few areas of primary forest. These observations suggest that the species is at least tolerant of, and may even favour, disturbed forest. However, complete clearance of forest understorey for agriculture is widespread within its range and appears to render the habitat unsuitable for Braun's Bushshrike, so habitat modification remains a significant threat.

The only previous range size estimate is of an Extent of Occurrence of 4,600 km<sup>2</sup> (BirdLife International 2000, 2008). Using the updated information presented herein, we suggest by the same definition a range of c.3,500 km<sup>2</sup>, smaller than that estimated by BirdLife International (2008) because we reject the possible record from



**Figure 2.** The bright orange breast of Braun's Bushshrike *Laniarius brauni* distinguishes it from the chestnut-breasted Luehder's Bushshrike *L. luehderi* (Nik Borrow)

**Figura 2.** O cor-de-laranja vivo do peito do picanço de Braun *Laniarius brauni* permite distingui-lo do picanço de Luehder *L. luehderi* cujo peito é castanho (Nik Borrow)



near Dondo (Dean 2001), 160 km to the south. However, further records will almost certainly reveal the species to be more widespread. Satellite imagery from Google Earth (2009, <http://earth.google.com/>) reveals a distinctive area of forest habitat running c.150 km north–south, from 07°16'S to 08°34'S, and 40 km east–west, between 15°20'E and 14°42'E, much of it within the known altitudinal range of Braun's Bushshrike (600–870 m). There is also a large block of more open forest south-west of this, although much of the latter lies below 600 m (Fig. 1). These forests need to be explored more extensively to establish the species' true range and habitat requirements.

Owing to the paucity of records, it is impossible to estimate the species' general abundance. However, Heinrich (1958) found that each 'finger' of forest penetrating the grasslands west of Camabatela had one or several pairs of Braun's Bushshrikes, and 3–4 pairs were found by both Sinclair *et al.* (2007) and MSLM & MM within a small area. These records suggest that the species is generally common in suitable habitat, although PVP considers that it is much less common than Gabela Bushshrike is on the central scarp. Importantly, however, it should be noted that the population estimate by BirdLife International (2008) of 498–996 individuals is based on the wrong range size—460 km<sup>2</sup> instead of 4,600 km<sup>2</sup>—and hence is an order of magnitude smaller than it should be. Using the same assumption of 1–2 individuals / km<sup>2</sup> and our own range estimate, we calculate a population size of 3,500–7,000 individuals.

The species is currently listed as Endangered, meeting criteria B1, of having an Extent of Occurrence of <5,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and C, of having a population size estimated at <2,500 mature individuals (BirdLife International 2008). Based on our population estimate of 3,500–7,000 individuals, it no longer meets Endangered species status for small population size. However, the known range is still smaller than 5,000 km<sup>2</sup>, within which its population may be fragmented and declining. Although we expect Braun's Bushshrike to be more widespread and numerous than is currently known, and the species may warrant downlisting to Vulnerable, we recommend this be done only when proof is available, in the form of field data from new localities that extend the known range.

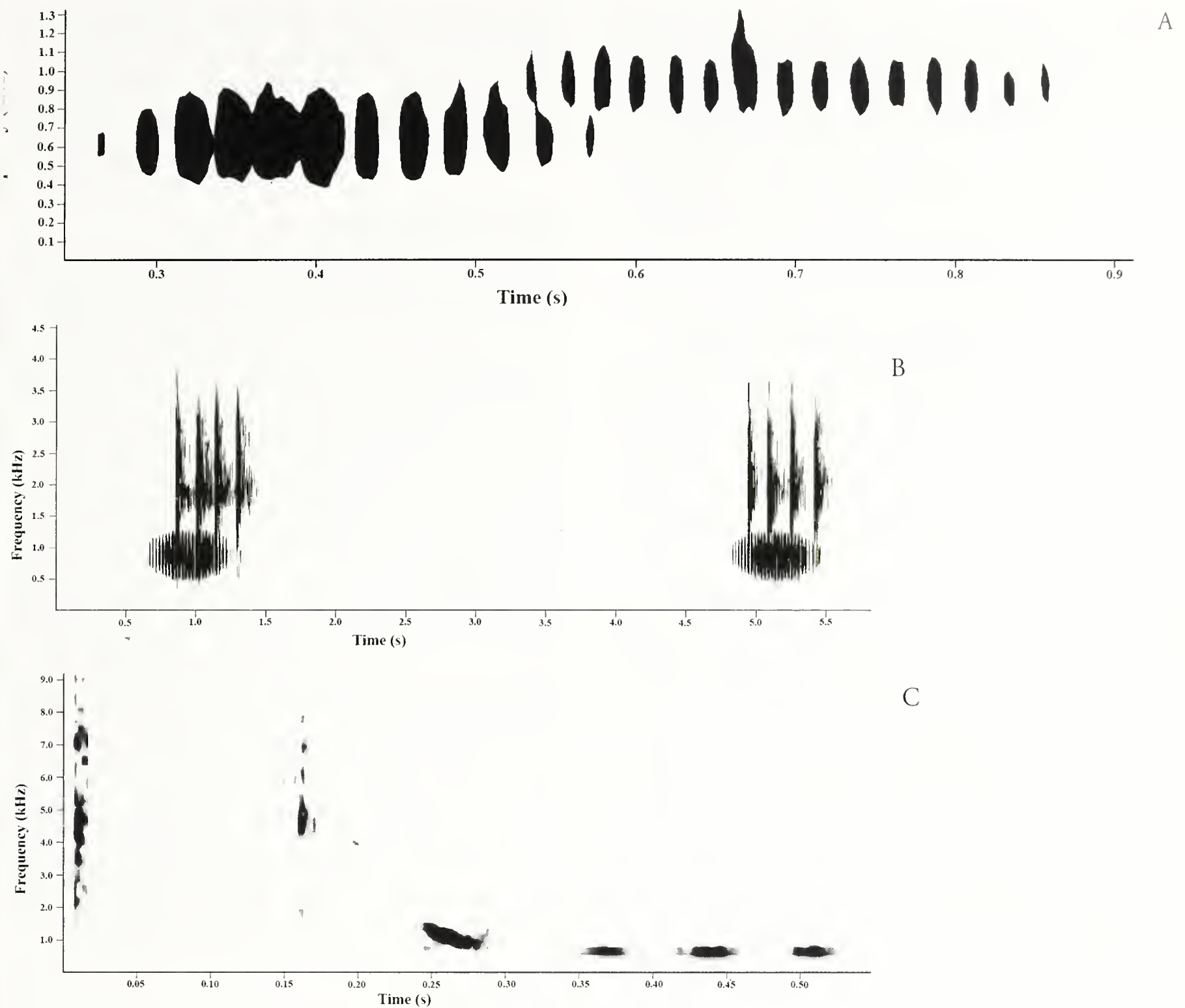
## Vocalisations

Owing to the species' skulking nature (Heinrich 1958), knowledge of its vocalisations is important for future surveys of Braun's Bushshrike. Playback of calls by NB & MSLM elicited excited responses from birds, so playback of vocalisations should be used in future surveys. Heinrich (1958) described the calls as distinctive and consisting of (i) a short, low, far-carrying growl (*kurr* or *urr*) given individually, between long pauses, (ii) two soft notes followed by two loud notes, rendered *didi* – *dudu*, (iii) a loud sharp, *tschäkdudodederr* when disturbed, and (iv) a repeated, loud, sharp *tschäk... tschäk... tschäk* in warning. Sinclair *et al.* (2007) describe the bird's voice as deep and guttural and 'very similar to both Luehder's *L. luehderi* and Gabela Bushshrike *L. amboimensis*, both in their contact-calls and duetting song'. Chapin (1954), although he never saw the species himself, wrote 'it has a voice much less pleasing than that of [Southern Boubou, probably referring to the Tropical / Swamp / Southern Boubou complex] *L. ferrugineus*, and similar no doubt to that of nominate *luehderi*'. Finally, Harris & Franklin (2000) give some further descriptions, repeated in Fry (2009), but we are unaware of the source of these.

NB & MSLM made sound-recordings of Braun's Bushshrike during our field observations; those of MSLM are archived at the British Library Sound Archive and will be published on Mills (in prep.). These recordings were copied digitally, edited with Goldwave software ([www.goldwave.com](http://www.goldwave.com)), inspected aurally, and used to produce sonograms with Raven Lite software (Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2003–05). Recordings and sonograms were compared to vocalisations of Gabela Bushshrike presented on Mills (2007) and described by Ryan *et al.* (2004) and Mills (2009), and of Luehder's Bushshrike presented on Chappuis (2000) and discussed by Mills (2009).

The commonest vocalisation is a low-pitched growl or croak, emitted at regular intervals. This call is analogous to the '*worrrk*' call of Gabela Bushshrike (Ryan *et al.* 2004). The rate of delivery (seconds between calls) varied significantly; of three recordings made of 50 seconds or longer, the slowest delivery was every 4.7 seconds. However, when excited by playback, birds increased the rate of delivery to an average of every 1.7 seconds ( $n = 1$  recording of 97 seconds). Limited observations





**Figure 3.** Sonograms of the vocalisations of Braun’s Bushshrike *Laniarius brauni*. A: two croak / growl calls delivered at different frequencies, by different birds calling simultaneously. B: duet, with the presumed male giving a croak / growl call and the female a series of loud clicks. C: threat / display-flight calls of the male: two harsh clicks, followed by four melodious whistles, the first whistle higher pitched than the following three.

**Figura 3.** Sonogramas das vocalizações do picanço de Braun *Laniarius brauni*. A: dois tipos de ‘grasnar’ emitidos em diferentes frequências por vários indivíduos ao mesmo tempo. B: dueto, com o macho presumido a grasnar e a fêmea a emitir uma série de estalidos altos. C: vocalizações de ameaça e/ou de voo de parada do macho: dois estalidos ásperos, seguidos por quatro assobios melodiosos, dos quais o primeiro com a frequência mais elevada.

reveal both the pitch and duration of this call to be variable, with pitch varying between at least 0.65 kHz (mean; range 0.4–0.9 kHz) and 0.95 kHz (0.8–1.1 kHz; Fig. 3a). These frequencies overlap with those of the analogous calls of Luehder’s and Gabela Bushshrikes (Dowsett-Lemaire 1990, Mills 2009), and these calls cannot be used to differentiate the species. The croak / growl is also given in duet by one member of a pair (thought to be the male because of its more aggressive responses), while the other bird makes a series of 4–10 loud clicks, like the *tschäk... tschäk... tschäk*

warning call described by Heinrich (1958) and similar to that of Luehder’s Bushshrike (Chappuis 2000) (Fig. 3b). The only other vocalisation heard by us during field observations was a series of notes given during a short, slow threat / display-flight, in which the presumed male alternated between exaggerated flapping and gliding, with its back feathers puffed-out. This display-flight is similar to that made by Swamp Boubou *Laniarius bicolor* (Fry & Keith 2000). The sequence commences with one or two harsh clicks, followed by four melodious whistles, the first whistle higher pitched



than the following three (Fig. 3c). No other melodious whistles, like those commonly made by Gabela and Luehder's Bushshrikes, were heard. However, our observations may not account for the full vocal repertoire of Braun's Bushshrike, and the second call described by Heinrich (1958) may be of a melodious whistle similar to those of Gabela and Luehder's Bushshrikes.

### Systematic treatment and nomenclature

The *Laniarius luehderi* complex comprises four generally recognised taxa: the similar *luehderi* and *castaneiceps* races which are always treated as subspecies of Luehder's Bushshrike *L. luehderi*, and the distinctive *brauni* and *amboimensis* whose systematic treatment has varied. Bannerman (1939) described *brauni* as a subspecies of *L. luehderi*, but remarked that it was 'extremely tempting to give it the status of a full species' due to its distinctive plumage. This treatment of *brauni* as a subspecies of *luehderi* has been followed in much of the literature (Hall & Moreau 1960, White 1962, Collar & Stuart 1985, Howard & Moore 1991, Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993, Harris & Franklin 2000, Dickinson 2003). Hall & Moreau (1960) considered *brauni* and *amboimensis* as incipient species whose status requires verification. Sibley & Monroe (1990) were the first to give *brauni* and *amboimensis* species status; they regarded them as allospecies, i.e. members of the *L. luehderi* superspecies. This treatment has been followed in most recent works (Clements 1991, Monroe & Sibley 1993, Collar *et al.* 1994, Fry & Keith 2000, BirdLife International 2008, Fry 2009, Gill *et al.* 2009). Given the distinct plumages of *brauni* and *amboimensis*, we recommend their treatment as full species until such time as a robust and complete phylogeny becomes available. Nguembock *et al.* (2008) constructed molecular phylogenies for most of the genus *Laniarius*, showing that plumage coloration is generally not a reliable character for defining species limits in the genus. Blood samples are now available for Gabela Bushshrike, but not yet for Braun's Bushshrike.

There is also disagreement concerning the most suitable English name. Sibley & Monroe (1990), Monroe & Sibley (1993), Clements (1991), Collar *et al.* (1994) and BirdLife International (2008) all use Orange-breasted Bushshrike. However, another widespread species *Chlorophoneus*

*sulfureopectus* is also known as Orange-breasted Bushshrike or Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike. To prevent confusion we prefer the unambiguous name Braun's Bushshrike, as employed by Fry & Keith (2000), Fry (2009) and Gill *et al.* (2009).

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# Fourth report of the Seychelles Bird Records Committee

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**Quatrième rapport du Comité d'Homologation Seychellois.** Le quatrième rapport quinquennal du Comité d'Homologation Seychellois, créé en 1992, est présenté ici. Il comprend les données acceptées d'espèces occasionnelles (espèces enregistrées moins d'une fois par an) pour la période du 1er janvier 2006 au 31 décembre 2010. Dix-sept espèces occasionnelles ont été ajoutées à la liste des Seychelles depuis la publication du rapport précédent (voir *Bull. ABC* 13: 170–177) en 2006. Le nombre des espèces enregistrées aux Seychelles est ainsi passé à 255, dont 65 espèces nicheuses, 27 migrants annuels, sept espèces éteintes et 156 occasionnelles. Un occasionnel, le Goéland de Heuglin, précédemment traité comme une espèce à part entière, est actuellement considéré comme une sous-espèce du Goéland brun *Larus fuscus heuglini*. Le Faucon de l'Amour *Falco amurensis*, précédemment considéré comme occasionnel, a été reclassé comme annuel. Des photos sont présentées de neuf espèces observées pour la première fois.

**Summary.** Seychelles Bird Records Committee, formed in 1992, publishes reports at intervals of five years. This fourth report summarises all accepted records of vagrants (species recorded less than annually) during the period 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2010. Seventeen vagrants have been added to the Seychelles list since the publication of the previous report. With these, the number of species recorded in Seychelles has increased to 255. One vagrant previously treated as a full species is now treated as a race, Heuglin's Gull *Larus fuscus heuglini*. Another species, Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*, previously classed as a vagrant is now an annual visitor. Photographs of nine new species where no details have been published are presented here.

**S**eychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) was formed in 1992 and publishes reports at intervals of five years with previous reports appearing in 1996, 2001 and 2006. A summary of as-yet unverified sightings received by SBRC is published every six months in the Recent Reports section of the *Bull. ABC* and accepted records are summarised quarterly on the website of SBRC: <http://www.stokecoll.ac.uk/sbrc/>

The first three SBRC reports have taken the form of a full checklist of the birds of Seychelles. This fourth report differs in focusing on accepted records of vagrants (species of less than annual occurrence) during the period 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2010 (i.e. since the previous report). A full checklist including the number of accepted records for each species and each island can be downloaded from the SBRC website.

Since its formation, SBRC has considered 1,675 records of which 1,351 have been accepted to species level (80.7%) and a further 107 records (6.4%) accepted to a qualified category (e.g. *Cuculus* sp. or Pintail *Gallinula stenura* / Swinhoe's Snipe *G. megala*). The remaining 12.9% is considered 'not proven'. The acceptance rates include records where the observer submitted a sighting as one species but SBRC accepted it as

another species and records where the observer has made no judgement, a fairly frequent occurrence in Seychelles (accounting for seven new species during 2006–10).

The number of species recorded in Seychelles in the third report was given as 239 as at 31 December 2005 (Skerrett *et al.* 2006). Seventeen new species have been added to the Seychelles list since then. One species, Heuglin's Gull, previously given full species status, is now treated as a race of Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus heuglini*. Therefore, after allowing for these changes, the number of species recorded in Seychelles as at 31 December 2010 is 255. This comprises 65 breeding species, 27 annual migrants, seven extinct species and 156 vagrants. Adjusting for taxonomic changes, the number of species on the Seychelles list has risen by 35% in the 15 years between the first report and the current report as follows:

Report	No. of sp.
First report, 1996	189
Second report, 2001	222
Third report, 2006	237
Fourth report, 2011	255



Highlights of the current report include the following:

1. A series of remarkable petrel sightings at Cousin Island, including two first records for Seychelles (Herald Petrel *Pterodroma heraldica* and Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*) plus the first breeding record of Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*, which itself was unrecorded prior to 2003.
2. Four new species for Seychelles from Aldabra. Three of these breed in the African region, whereas the majority of vagrants to Seychelles are long-distance migrants breeding outside the region. These are African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*, Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* and Madagascar Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*. The first Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* for Seychelles was also recorded on Aldabra.
3. The continued prominence of Bird Island, the 'Fair Isle' of Seychelles, for recording long-distance migrants, with 45 new vagrant records accepted including three new species for Seychelles: Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minimus*, Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* and Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*. The first *Ficedula* flycatcher for Seychelles was also recorded on Bird Island, although the bird could not be identified to species.
4. The meteoric rise to prominence of Alphonse in the Amirantes following the establishment of the Alphonse Island Conservation Centre in 2007. The island produced 57 accepted records (plus four from neighbouring St. François), more than any other island and including the first records of three species: Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*, Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* and Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*.
5. Five other first records have been accepted: Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* on Silhouette, Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii* on Aride, Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola* on Mahé, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* at sea and Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* on Denis.
6. Accounts of the sighting of four of the 17 new species have been published in *Bull ABC*. Publication is pending for four more. Photographs of the nine species for which full details will not be published are presented here.

7. The status of Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* has been changed from vagrant to annual, despite the fact that it was unrecorded prior to 1995 (excluding a single plausible account from the 1970s that SBRC is still attempting to trace). Remarkably, it was the second most frequently reported migrant landbird during 2006–10.
8. The most frequently reported migrant landbird during 2006–10 was Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*, given invasions in two successive years including more than 1,000 birds scattered across the granitic islands and Amirantes in 2008–09, with smaller numbers the following season. A similar invasion has been recorded only once previously, in 2001/2002.

The following records were accepted in the five years to 31 December 2010. Numbers in parentheses represent, first, the total number of accepted records to date and, second, the number of records accepted during the five-year period.

**Herald Petrel** *Pterodroma heraldica* (1, 1)

One, the hill, Cousin, 10–11 June 2009 (D. J. R. Andrews *et al.*). Details of this first record will be published elsewhere.

**Kermadec Petrel** *Pterodroma neglecta* (5, 3)

Intermediate morph, Cousin, 13 August 2006 (C. Eikenaar). Dark morph, Cousin, 10 January 2007 (C. Eikenaar, M. Mainwaring). Two, Cousin, 18 November 2009, one seen with a chick on 24 November 2009 (J. Simeon *et al.*). First recorded on Cousin on 29 August 2003 and again on 29 June 2004 (Eikenaar & Skerrett 2006). Both sightings and that in August 2006 probably involved the same bird, ringed in June 2004 and re-captured on 24 November 2009, when it formed one of a breeding pair. The second breeding adult, a dark-morph bird, is possibly the same individual recorded in January 2007. This bird was ringed on 18 November 2009. No subsequent reports have been received by SBRC.

**Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria fallax* (1, 1)

One, the hill, Cousin, 15 June 2009 (D. J. R. Andrews *et al.*). Details of this first record for Seychelles will be published elsewhere.



**Jouanin's Petrel** *Bulweria fallax* (11, 1)  
Four, between Cosmoledo and Poivre, 18 March 2009 (R. Wanless *et al.*).

**Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* (6, 1)  
One, off D'Arros, 3 July 2009 (U. Engelhardt *et al.*).

**Storm-petrel sp.** (probably **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus*)  
One, at sea near Cousin, June 2007 (G. Rocamora).

**Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica* (1, 1)  
One, Alphonse, found alive but later died, 30 June 2010 (A. Nahaboo *et al.*; Fig.1). The specimen is now at The Natural History Museum, Tring, UK (BMNH 2011.24.1).



**Figure 1.** Black-bellied Storm-petrel / Océanite à ventre noir *Fregetta tropica*, Alphonse, 30 June 2010 (Aurélien Nahaboo)

**Storm-petrel sp.**  
One, between Mahé and Praslin, 25 May 2008 (S. Gillings). One, 30 km east of La Digue, 20 October 2009 (K. Jolliffe, J. Henwood).

**Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* (7, 1)  
Adult, Cousin, 10 October 2010 (P. Chadwick).

**Reed Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax africanus* (3, 1)  
Adult, Grand Terre, Aldabra, 16 February 2010 (S. Balderson).

**Eurasian Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* (6, 2)  
One, Bird Island, 5 November 2005–2 April 2006 (R. Bresson *et al.*). Adult, Alphonse, 31 October–1 November 2010 (A. Nahaboo, S. Agricole).

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* (4, 1)  
Non-breeding adult, Praslin, 12 January 2010 (K. de Jong, M. I. van Neirop).

**Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii* (6, 2)  
One, Denis Island, 10 December 2007 (C. J. Feare, C. Hoareau). One, Alphonse, 30 October–5 November 2009 (P. A. Adam, M. Labrosse).

**Ardeola sp.** (probably **Madagascar Pond Heron** *Ardeola idea*)  
Juvenile, Assumption Island, 3 March 2008 (G. Rocamora). One, Poivre, 19 March 2009 (R. Wanless *et al.*).

**Ardeola sp.**  
One, Desroches, 21–28 October 2009 (P. Summerton, L. Thompson).

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* (26, 3)  
Two, Praslin, 31 December 2008 (J. Bisschop, T. Bisschop). One, Mahé, 25 January 2009 (A. P. Skerrett). One, Cousine, 5 February–3 March 2010 (K. Jolliffe *et al.*).

**Great Egret** *Egretta alba* (16, 5)  
One, Grand Terre, Aldabra, 23 April 2008 (C. Onezia, D. Louange). One, St. Joseph Atoll, 26 April 2009 (B. Narty). Adult in breeding plumage, Paul Island, St. Joseph Atoll, 10 November 2009 (B. Narty). One, Mahé, 14 November 2009 (A. P. Skerrett, S. Ansell). One, Bird Island, 9–11 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* (43, 9)  
One, Alphonse, 16 October–9 November 2007 (L. Macgregor, R. Bijoux). Immature, Denis Island, 3 October 2008 (C. Onezia). Adult, Mahé, 14 December–20 December 2008 (T. Vel *et al.*). Adult, Desroches, 23 April 2009 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*). Adult, Mahé, c.18 October 2009–18 November 2009 (T. Vel, A. P. Skerrett). Immature, Alphonse, 22 October 2009 (A. Rose, M. Labrosse). One, Desroches, 24 October–17 November 2009 (P. Summerton, D. Jupiter). First-year, Desroches, 9–11 October 2010 (T. Jupiter, A. Commettant). Two, Mahé, 20 October 2010 (B. & G. Slade).



**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* (10, 7)

One, Mahé, 13 December 2008 (A. P. Skerrett, B. Cooper). One, Frégate, 8–11 November 2009 (G. Canning, S. Hill). Immature, Bird Island, 10–17 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). Up to eight, La Digue, 23 March 2010 (I. Rasmussen *et al.*). Three, including at least one adult in breeding plumage, Mahé, 25–26 March 2010 (I. Rasmussen *et al.*). One, Eden Island, 3 April, two, 19 April, four, 20 April, three, 23 April and two, 22 June, one remaining to 6 November 2010 (G. Rocamora *et al.*). One, Mahé, 17 June 2010 (R. M. Mason).

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* (1, 1)

Male, Silhouette, 17 February–1 March 2006 (J. Larue, G. Esparon; Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** Male Eurasian Wigeon / Canard siffleur *Anas penelope*, Silhouette, 17 February–1 March 2006 (Jules Larue)

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* (10, 3)

Female, Mahé, 5 December 2007, joined by second female and a male first week of January 2008, all three remaining until 21 January 2008 (M. J. Dale *et al.*). Two females, Mahé, 20 December 2008 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*). First-winter, Aride, 20 January 2010 (P. Knott, J. Grant).

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* (9, 1)

Female or immature, Aride, 5 January 2010 (P. Knott, J. Grant).

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* (4, 1)

Adult male, Denis Island, 25–27 November 2008 (J. Nevill, F. Hoareau).

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* (1, 1)

Juvenile female, sewage pond on Alphonse, 23–25 December 2006 (A. P. Skerrett, A Fowls). Details of this first record for Seychelles have been published (Skerrett 2009).

**European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* (4, 1)

One, Denis Island, 24 April 2006 (R. Collins, C. Hoareau).

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* (3, 2)

One, Alphonse, 26–27 March 2008 (A. Rose *et al.*). Adult, Alphonse, 24 December 2008 and 7 January 2009 (A. Rose *et al.*).

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* (6, 3)

Immature, North Island, 25 October 2007 (L. Ferreira, S. Talma). One, Alphonse, 27 February–3 April 2009 (P. A. Adam, A. Rose). Female, Desroches, 8 March 2010 (P. Summerton).

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* (1, 1)

Adult female, found dead 30 m inland of the beach, Alphonse, 6 January 2008 (L. Macgregor; Fig 3). The specimen is now at The Natural History Museum, Tring, UK (BMNH 2011.23.1).



**Figure 3.** Adult female Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* found dead on Alphonse, 6 January 2008 (Adrian Skerrett)

Faucon crécerelle *Falco tinnunculus*, femelle adulte, trouvée morte à Alphonse, 6 janvier 2008 (Adrian Skerrett)

**Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* (5, 1)

Adult female, Aride, 5 December 2008 (R. Tiatousse *et al.*).



**Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* (29, 3)

First-year, Picard, Aldabra, 12 December 2006 (G. Esparon, P. Pistorius). First-winter, Picard, Aldabra, 21 January 2007 (G. Esparon *et al.*). Immature, Aride, 19 November 2008 (R. Tiatousse, I. Krummholz). A ring only, Alphonse, 12 December 2009, had been applied to a first-year, Las Islas Columbretes, Spain, on 17 September 2008.

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* (25, 7)

Juvenile, Alphonse, 10 December 2007–13 January 2008 (L. Macgregor *et al.*). One to three, Denis, 24–27 November 2008 (J. Nevill *et al.*). First-winter, Cousine, 24 December 2008–11 January 2009 (K. Jolliffe, S.-M. Jolliffe). Two first-winters, Bird Island, 15–21 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). First-winter, D'Arros, 21 November 2009 (D. Ellinger). First-winter, Poivre, 7 December 2009 (L. Claven). Immature, Desroches, 3–4 January 2010 (L. Thompson, D. Jupiter).

**Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus* (3, 1)

One, Alphonse, 7–9 December 2009 (P. A. Adam, J. Hoareau).

**Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* (12, 6)

At least two, Alphonse, 12 October–17 November 2007 (L. Macgregor *et al.*). Adult, Silhouette, 28 October 2007 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*). Adult and immature, Praslin, 28 November 2008 (R. Tiatousse *et al.*). Immature, North Island, 25 September 2009 (E. Mokhobo, L. Wombach). Adult, Alphonse, 5–14 November 2009 (P. A. Adam). One, Bird Island, 11 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

**Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* (10, 6)

One, Alphonse, 10 December 2006–27 March 2007 (M. Betts *et al.*). Immature, Alphonse, 26–31 October 2008 (P. A. Adam, R. Bijoux). One, Bird Island, 9–28 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). Four adults, Alphonse, 4–16 May 2009 (P. A. Adam *et al.*). Adult, Frégate, 12 June 2009 (M. Wilkens, B. Whittington). One, Frégate, 25–27 March 2010 (G. Canning).

**Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum* (15, 3)

Adult, Alphonse, 2 December 2006–27 March 2007 (M. Betts *et al.*). Up to five, Silhouette, 23–26 October 2007 (R. Gerlach, G. Gerlach). Two, Praslin, 24 November 2008 (H. Kisbye).

**Pratincole sp.** *Glareola* sp.

One, Mahé, 15 February 2006 (A. P. Skerrett). One dead, North Island, 29 October 2006 (U. Bristol). One, Mahé, 19 November 2008 (H. Kisbye). One, Desroches, 27 February 2009 (E. Palmer, M. Collins). Two, Frégate, 14 November 2009 (G. Canning, S. Hill). One, Desroches, 1 March 2010 (P. Summerton).

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* (10, 1)

One, Alphonse, 21 November 2008 (M. Betts *et al.*).

**Oriental Plover** *Charadrius veredus* (5, 1)

Adult, Alphonse, 26 October–11 November 2008 (P. A. Adam, R. Bijoux).

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* (6, 1)

One, Mahé, 10 March 2007 (M. Betts, A. P. Skerrett).

**Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta* (2, 1)

One, Mahé, 28 January 2007 (A. P. Skerrett).

**Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* (5, 2)

Non-breeding adult, D'Arros, 13 November 2006 (J. C. Cadbury *et al.*). Adult, Alphonse, 8–16 May 2009 (P. A. Adam, A. Rose).

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* (4, 1)

One, Alphonse, 2–3 November 2007 (P. A. Adam, R. Bijoux).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* (6, 1)

One, Alphonse, 6–18 November 2007 (P. A. Adam, A. P. Skerrett).

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* (30, 3)

Juvenile female, Mahé, 23 September 2009 (R. Martin, G. Rocamora). Juvenile male and juvenile female, Bird Island, 13 November–28 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). One, Desroches, 16 November 2009 (L. Thompson, D. Jupiter).



**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyrtus minimus* (1, 1)  
One, at the tern colony, Bird Island, 25 October 2004–25 March 2005 (A. P. Skerrett, R. Bresson, G. Norah, M. Norah). Details of this first record for Seychelles have been published (Skerrett 2009).

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* (16, 5)  
Three, Mahé, 10 March 2007 (M. Betts, A. P. Skerrett). One, Alphonse, 16–22 November 2008 (M. Betts *et al.*). One, Mahé, 20 December 2008 (J. Komdeur *et al.*). One, Aride, 17 October 2009 (M. Sur). Two, Alphonse, 20 October–6 November 2009 (A. Rose *et al.*).

**Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* (3, 1)  
One, Mahé, 16–17 January 2008 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*).

**Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura* or **Swinhoe's Snipe** *G. megala*  
One, Bird Island, 12 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips).

**Snipe sp.** *Gallinago* sp.  
One, Alphonse, 22 January 2009 (A. Rose). One, Mahé, 20 November 2009 (R. Martin). Two, Denis Island, 30 December 2009 (M. Sur).

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* (7, 1)  
One, Aride, 24 December 2009 (P. Knott *et al.*).

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* (4, 1)  
One, Silhouette, 11 September 2006 (R. Gerlach, G. Gerlach).

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* (10, 1)  
One, Mahé, 12 October 2006 (J. Burrell, G. Burrell).

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* (8, 1)  
One, Mahé, 21 February–10 March 2007 (M. J. Dale, M. Betts).

**Grey-tailed Tattler** *Heteroscelus brevipes* (4, 2)  
Four, St. François, 1 March 2007 (M. Betts, T. Potgieter). One, St. François, 17 November 2008 (M. Betts).

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* (4, 1)  
Pale-morph adult, Denis Island, 14 August 2007 (A. Mason, R. M. Mason).

**Sooty Gull** *Larus hemprichii* (1, 1)  
Adult in breeding plumage, Aride, 29 August 2005 (F. Hobro, T. Catry, G. Stoye, F. Salomon). Details of this first record for Seychelles have been published (Hobro & Catry 2006).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* (9, 2)  
One, probably *L. f. heuglini*, off Grande Soeur Island, 2 March 2007 (H. Mellie). First-winter *L. f. heuglini* or *L. f. barabensis*, dead, Mahé, 29 December 2008 (G. Gendron *et al.*).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus barabensis* or **Caspian Gull** *L. cachinnans*  
One, Denis Island, 13–15 January 2007 (M. Mason *et al.*). One, Picard, Aldabra, 29 January 2007 (G. Esparon *et al.*).

**Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus (Chroicocephalus) ridibundus* (17, 3)  
Adult in breeding plumage, Bird Island, 25 March–2 April 2006 (B. Sampson *et al.*). First-winter, Alphonse, 13 and 15 December 2008 (P. A. Adam, A. Rose). One, Cousine, 20 January 2010 (K. Jolliffe *et al.*).

**Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna (Gelocheidon) nilotica* (11, 1)  
Adult, off Bird Island, 18 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips).

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* (5, 1)  
One, Cousine, 16 May 2010 (K. Jolliffe, D. Nell).

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* (5, 1)  
Adult, Mahé, 11 October 2006 (R. Coomber, G. Jessy).

**European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* (8, 1)  
Two immatures, Desroches, 15–17 October 2010 (T. Jupiter, A. Commettant).

**Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus* (10, 3)  
Adult, Bird Island, 14–16 January 2006 (M. Norah *et al.*). One, Denis Island, 29 April 2006 (C. Hoareau). Adult, Cousine, 30 November and 4 December 2008 (K. Jolliffe, S.-M. Jolliffe).

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* (36, 11)  
Immature, Mahé, 6 January 2006 (T. Vel). Immature, Alphonse, 15–22 January 2009 (P. A.



Adam *et al.*). Adult, Desroches, 23 October–26 November 2009 (P. Summerton, D. Jupiter). First-winter, Mahé, 18 November 2009 (T. Vel, A. P. Skerrett). First-winter, Bird Island, 16–26 November 2009, with two on 19–20 November (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). At least one, North Island, 16 November–1 December 2009 (L. Vanherck *et al.*). First-winter, Cousine, 4 December 2009 (K. Jolliffe *et al.*). First-winter, Cousine, 25 December 2009–2 January 2010 (K. Jolliffe *et al.*). First-winter, Praslin, 12 January 2010 (K. de Jong, M. I. van Neiro). First-winter, Aride, 14 January 2010 (P. Knott *et al.*). One, Cousine, 21 January–20 February 2010 (K. Jolliffe *et al.*).

**Lesser Cuckoo** *Cuculus poliocephalus* (15, 4)

One, Alphonse, 4 January 2008 (L. Macgregor). One, badly decomposed, North Island, 20 December 2007 (L. Vanherck). One, probably adult, Bird Island, 22 November 2009 (A. P. Skerrett). One, Mahé, 13 January–27 February 2010, with two on the last date (E. Palmer, A. P. Skerrett).

**Cuckoo sp.** *Cuculus* sp.

One, Cousine, 15 January 2009 (K. Jolliffe).

**Eurasian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* (4, 2)

Adult female, Aride, 10–29 January 2008 (B. McCallum *et al.*). One, Aride, 20 November 2008 (R. Tiatousse *et al.*).

**Nightjar sp.** *Caprimulgus* sp.

One, Bird Island, 16–18 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

**White-throated Needletail** *Hirundapus caudacutus* (5, 1)

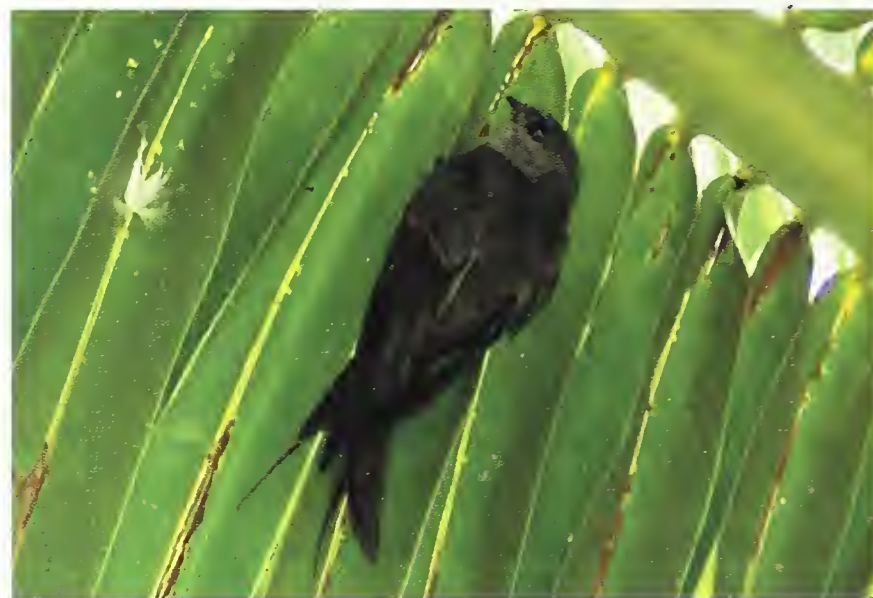
One, Alphonse, 1 December 2006 (M. Betts).

**African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* (1, 1)

One, *C. p. gracilis*, Picard, Aldabra, 20 December 2006 (P. Pistorius, G. Esparon; Fig. 4).

**Common Swift** *Apus apus* (19, 5)

One, D'Arros 9–12 November 2006 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*). One, *A. a. pekinensis*, Alphonse, 26 April 2007 (M. Betts). One, Alphonse, 1–15 December 2008 (P. A. Adam *et al.*). Up to ten, Desroches, 18–25 October 2009 (P. Summerton,



**Figure 4.** African Palm Swift / Martinet des palmes *Cypsiurus parvus*, Picard, Aldabra, 20 December 2006 (Pierre Pistorius)

L. Thompson). One, Desroches, 5 February 2010 (P. Summerton).

**Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* (12, 2)

One, Bird Island, 11–15 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). One, Denis Island, 26–27 December 2009 (M. Sur).

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis* (5, 1)

One, North Island, 24 January 2009 (M. Mounac, A. Saunders).

**Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* (1, 1)

One, Bird Island, 20–21 November 2009 (V. E. Phillips *et al.*). Details of this first record for Seychelles appear elsewhere in this issue (Phillips & Phillips 2011).

**Kingfisher sp.** *Alcedo* sp.

One, probably Common Kingfisher *A. atthis*, Alphonse, 2–3 December 2006 (M. Betts *et al.*).

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus* (17 + 3 invasions, 0 + 2 invasions)

This species appeared in significant numbers in 2008/09 and 2009/10. SBRC accepted all records of this species from reliable observers during these seasons without supporting descriptions or photographs.

In 2008/09, birds appeared on the following islands in chronological order: (1) Praslin: 17 November–28 April with max. 35, 26 November; (2) Denis: 18 November–early July with max. 500+, 22–23 November; (3) Cousine: 20 November–14



December with max. 40, 13 December; (4) Alphonse: 20 November–6 February with max. 43, 8 December; (5) Aride: 20 November–4 February with max. 18, 22 November; (6) Mahé: 20 November–14 December with max. 37, 9 December; (7) North: 20 November–2 December with max. 50, 1–2 December; (8) Bird: 21 November–4 May with max. 100, 21 November; (9) St. Joseph Atoll: 21 November–10 June with max. 120, 21 November; (10) Desroches: 22 November–end May with max. 10, 22 November; (11) La Digue: 3–5, 23 November–9 December; (12) D'Arros: 23 November–27 June with max. 100+, 24 November–18 December; (13) Cousin: three, 26 November and six, 10 December; (14) Curieuse: four each on 6 December and 6 January; (15) Conception: 12, 12 December; (16) Silhouette: 22 November–27 December with max. 70, 2 December, but no further sightings until three, 23 April; (17) Eden Island: two, 30 January and three, 10 February; (18) St. François: three, 15 January and one, 2 April; (19) Poivre: four, 12 March.

In 2009/10, birds appeared on the following islands in chronological order: (1) Bird: 20–25, 8 November–28 November; (2) Mahé: one, 18 November and two, 16 May; (3) North: six, 18 November; (4) Cousin: two, 19 November; (5) Conception: six, 23 November; (6) Aride: two, 16–20 November; (7) Alphonse: one, 28 November; (8) Denis: at least one, 2–12 December; (9) D'Arros: four, 15 December; (9) Silhouette: one, 15–16 December.

**Madagascar Bee-eater** *Merops superciliosus* (1, 1)  
Adult, between Settlement Beach, Picard Island and west Grand Terre, 15–31 October 2006 (P. Pistorius, S. Bostock, S. Onezia, C. Onezia, U. Samedi; Fig. 5).

**Eurasian Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* (3, 1)  
Two, Picard, Aldabra, 14 November 2007 (P. Pistorius *et al.*).

**European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* (43, 11)  
Adult, Picard, Aldabra, 16–19 May 2007 (A. Hermans). One, D'Arros, 8 December 2008 (U. Engelhardt). One, Praslin, 16 November 2009 (G. Rocamora). Juvenile, Desroches, 17–25 November 2009 (P. Summerton, L. Thompson). Immature, Bird Island, 10–27 November 2009

(N. J. Phillips *et al.*). Two, Alphonse, 25–28 November 2009 (P. A. Adam, A. Rose). One, Denis Island, 1 December 2009 (M. Sur, C. Onezia). One, Frégate, 11–13 November 2009 (G. Canning, S. Hill). One, Desroches, 7–19 February 2010 (P. Summerton). Adult, Alphonse, 10–14 March 2010 (A. Nahaboo, J. Michel, P. A. Adam). One, Bird Island, 18 March 2010 (G. Rocamora).

**Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* (14 east of Aldabra group, 4)

Adult, Alphonse, 11 December 2006 (M. Betts). One, Alphonse, 17 September 2008 (P. A. Adam *et al.*). One, Alphonse, 22–23 November 2008 (P. A. Adam, M. Betts). Adult, Alphonse, 10–22 November 2009 (P. A. Adam).

**Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* (4, 1)

One, Bird Island, 16–23 November 2009, with two present on the last date (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

**Plain Martin** *Riparia paludicola* (1, 1)

One, probably *R. p. chinensis*, Anse Etoile, Mahé, 9 December 2008 (A. P. Skerrett). Details of this first record for Seychelles have been published (Skerrett 2009).

**Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* (22, 7)

Two, Bird Island, 27 October 2007 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*). One, Alphonse, 15–17 February 2007



**Figure 5.** Adult Madagascar Bee-eater / Guêpier de Madagascar *Merops superciliosus* between Settlement Beach, Picard Island and west Grand Terre, 15–31 October 2006 (Sam Bostock)



(M. Betts, S. Barclay). One, Alphonse, 23–26 December 2008 (A. Rose, P. A. Adam). One, Alphonse, 20–26 October 2009 (A. Rose, P. A. Adam). One, Bird Island, 9–11 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). Adult, Alphonse, 9 November 2010 (A. Nahaboo *et al.*). Two, Cousine, 10 November 2010 (K. Jolliffe, S.-M. Jolliffe).

**Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* (1, 1)

One, *H. s. smithii*, Research Station, Picard, Aldabra, 8 February 2008 (C. Onezia, B. Rose; Fig. 6).



**Figure 6.** Wire-tailed Swallow / Hirondelle à longs brins *Hirundo smithii*, Picard, Aldabra, 8 February 2008 (Catherina Onezia)

**Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*

(9, 3)  
One, Alphonse, 9–14 April 2007 (M. Betts, A. P. Skerrett). Three, Alphonse, 16–18 May 2008 (A. Rose *et al.*). One, Alphonse, 4–5 October 2009 (A. Rose, P. A. Adam).

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* (31, 10)

One, probably male *M. f. beema*, Bird Island, 3 December 2005–March 2006 (M. Norah *et al.*). Adult male, possibly *M. f. beema*, Mahé, 27 January 2007 (M. Betts, A. P. Skerrett). One, Aride, 18–19 November 2007 (B. Sampson *et al.*). One, Picard, Aldabra, 19 December 2007 (P. Pistorius). One, Mahé, 27 April 2007 (V. Nichnadowicz, A. Rassool). One, Silhouette, 23–25 October 2007 (R. Gerlach, G. Gerlach). One, Alphonse, 1–5 January 2008 (L. Macgregor, P. A. Adam). Adult male, probably *M. f. beema*, Denis Island, 9 December 2008 (J. Nevill, A. M.

McDevitt). Immature, Aride, 19 November 2008 (R. Tiatousse *et al.*). First-winter, Aride, 20–25 November 2009 (R. Sutcliffe, M. Sur).

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* (9, 3)

One, D'Arros, around June 2006 (G. Ollmann). One, North Island, 2–3 November 2006 (U. Bristol). One, North Island, 18–19 November 2009 (G. Rocamora *et al.*).

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* (30, 7)

Two, Mahé, 6 December 2006 (M. Betts). One, Picard, Aldabra, 25 November 2007 (D. Monthy, C. Onezia). First-winter, Alphonse, 23 October–3 November 2007 (L. Macgregor *et al.*). Female or first-winter, D'Arros, 9 November 2007 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*). Male, probably *M. a. alba*, D'Arros, 7 November 2009 (B. Narty). One, Desroches, 26 November 2009 (L. Thompson). One, Bird Island, 15–20 November 2009 (V. E. Phillips *et al.*).

**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* (17, 1)

Up to four first-winters and one adult, Bird Island, 11–25 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

(11, 3)  
One, probably first-year male, ship-assisted from 49 km east-northeast of La Digue, 29 October 2005, to off La Digue, 30 October 2005 (C. Anderson *et al.*). Female or first-winter, Alphonse, 18–22 November 2008 (M. Betts *et al.*). Female or immature, Bird Island, 11 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips).

**Common Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus* (1, 1)

One, Denis Island, 27 December 2009 (M. Sur; Fig. 7). Accepted as either *S. t. variegatus* or *S. t. armenicus*.

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* (47, 6)

One, Picard, Aldabra, 11 February 2007 (G. Esparon). One, Aride, 18–20 December 2007 (B. McCallum *et al.*). Male, Alphonse, 12 February 2008 (P. A. Adam *et al.*). First-winter male, Alphonse, 12–16 January 2009 (P. A. Adam *et al.*). One, Picard, Aldabra, 14 January 2010 (S. Balderson). Male, Denis, 3 January 2010 (M. Sur).





**Figure 7.** Common Stonechat / Traquet pâtre *Saxicola torquatus*, Denis Island, 27 December 2009 (Michal Sur)

**Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* (2, 1)  
First-winter female, Bird Island, 13–20 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* (1, 1)  
First-winter male, Bird Island, 16–19 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips, R. Bresson, P. Norah, R. Coon). First-winter male, *O. d. oreophila*, Cousine, 23–24 November 2009, was probably the same individual. (K. Jolliffe, S.-M. Jolliffe). Full details appear elsewhere in this issue (Phillips & Phillips 2011).

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* (7, 3)  
Male, Bird Island, 27 October 2007 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*). One, Mahé, 6–7 November 2007 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*). One, La Digue, 17–18 December 2007 (S. Ansell, R. Thomson).

**Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* (4, 1)  
Adult female, Bird Island, 14 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips).

**Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* (1, 1)  
One, found exhausted and later died, Research Station, Picard, Aldabra, 24 April 2007 (U. Samedi, C. Onezia, G. Esparon; Fig. 8). The specimen is now at The Natural History Museum, Tring, UK (BMNH 2008.43.1).



**Figure 8.** Marsh Warbler / Rousserolle verderolle *Acrocephalus palustris*, Picard, Aldabra, 24 April 2007 (Guy Esparon)



**Figure 9.** Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, aboard the *Le Ponant*, between Aldabra and Alphonse, 27 March 2006 (Gérard Rocamora)

Fauvette des jardins *Sylvia borin*, à bord du *Le Ponant*, entre Aldabra et Alphonse, 27 mars 2006 (Gérard Rocamora)

**Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* (3, 1)  
One, Bird Island, 12 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips).

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* (4, 1)  
One, St. François Atoll, 4 March 2007 (E. Quilindo *et al.*).

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (4, 2)  
One, Bird Island, 17 November 2009 (V. E. Phillips, N. J. Phillips). One, Bird Island, 27 November 2009 (M.-F. Savy *et al.*).



**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* (1, 1)

One, aboard the *Le Ponant*, midway between Aldabra and Alphonse, 27 March 2006 (G. Rocamora *et al.*; Fig. 9).

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* (2, 1)

Male, Bird Island, 16 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips).

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* (30, 1)

One, Picard, Aldabra, 30 October–3 November 2007 (C. Onezia, B. Marie).

**Ficedula** sp.

First-winter, Bird Island, 13 November and 17 November 2009 (V. E. Phillips, N. J. Phillips, R. Bresson). SBRC was unable to conclude whether this first record involved European Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca*, Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis* or Semi-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata*. Full details appear elsewhere in this issue (Phillips & Phillips 2011).

**European Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* (18, 9)

First-year, Picard, Aldabra, 24 December 2006 (S. Bostock, G. Esparon). One, probably female, Cousine, 21 November 2007 (K. Jolliffe). Adult female or subadult male, dead, D'Arros, 26 September 2008 (W. Labrosse, B. Narty). Male and female or immature, Praslin, 11 October 2008 (K. Jolliffe, S.-M. Jolliffe). Female or first-year, St. François, 28 October 2008 (P. A. Adam, R. Bijoux). Female or immature, Bird Island, 11 November 2009 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). Female or first-winter, Cousine, 24 December 2009 (K. Jolliffe, K. Phillips). One, Cousine, 15–30 October 2010 (K. Jolliffe, S.-M. Jolliffe). Adult male, Alphonse, 14 November 2010 (A. Nahaboo).

**Acknowledgements**

We pay tribute to the contribution of former committee member Bob Scott, a member of SBRC for ten years, who sadly passed away in March 2009. Bob will be remembered by all who knew him as a wonderful, intelligent, witty human being, and an excellent ornithologist. We also thank our consultants who contributed to records considered during the period covered by this paper, namely Dick Forsman (raptors), John Marchant (waders), Klaus Malling Olsen (gulls), Tony Palliser (seabirds) and Robert Prÿs-Jones (museums). Thanks are also due to Steven Blakemore and Stoke-on-Trent College, sponsors of the SBRC website <http://www.stokecoll.ac.uk/sbrc/>

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# Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* in eastern Angola: behavioural notes and the first photographs and sound-recordings

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**A cisticola-de-cauda-preta *Cisticola melanurus* no Este de Angola: notas sobre o seu comportamento e primeiras fotografias e gravações de sons.** Em julho / agosto de 2010 procurámos durante nove dias a cisticola-de-cauda-preta *Cisticola melanurus* em localidades no Este de Angola onde esta espécie mal conhecida (categoria 'Dados Insuficientes' da IUCN) tinha sido previamente registrada. Encontrámos um par e um grupo de 6 a 8 indivíduos, incluindo adultos e juvenis, em bosque maduro de *Brachestylgia* (miombo) na área de Cacolo. Foram obtidas as primeiras fotografias e gravações de vocalizações. Um juvenil foi capturado e medido. Os indivíduos observados alimentavam-se sobretudo em matos densos perto do solo nas bordas dos bosques e em clareiras, mas também dentro dos bosques fechados a todas as alturas, do solo às copas mais altas (cerca de 12 m). Ao vivo, a espécie tem semelhanças com a cisticola-rabilonga *C. angusticauda* e, em menor grau, com a cisticola-de-cabeça-ruiva *C. fulvicapilla*; só superficialmente faz lembrar um apalis, como previamente sugerido. Os sons que produz incluem estalidos com as asas, uma vocalização de contacto de baixo volume e um canto inconspícuo mas ainda assim único e bem diferente dos cantos da cisticola-rabilonga e da cisticola-de-cabeça-ruiva.

**Summary.** We spent nine days in July / August 2010 searching for the Data Deficient Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* in eastern Angola at localities from where the species has previously been reported. We found a pair and a group of 6–8 birds, consisting of adults and juveniles, in mature miombo woodland in the Cacolo area. Photographs were taken and sound-recordings made. A juvenile was trapped and measured. Birds mostly fed low in dense undergrowth on the edge of woodland and in clearings, although they foraged at all heights, from ground level to the canopy of the tallest trees (c.12 m) in closed-canopy woodland. In life the species appeared similar to Long-tailed Cisticola *C. angusticauda* and to a lesser degree Neddicky *C. fulvicapilla*; it was only superficially similar to an *Apalis*. Sounds included wing-snapping, a weak, soft contact call, and an inconspicuous yet distinctive song, quite different from that of Neddicky or Long-tailed Cisticola.

**B**lack-tailed (or Slender-tailed) Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* is a scarce and localised warbler (Cisticolidae) known from a handful of localities scattered across eastern Angola and the western Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Irwin 1991, Urban *et al.* 1997), both of which are remote and little-visited regions by ornithologists. Consequently, the species is poorly known and is listed as Data Deficient (BirdLife International 2010). Irwin (1991) summarised then-available information on the species, which consisted of six specimens collected in Angola, eight specimens collected in DRC, field observations by Neave (1910), G. Heinrich (*in* Ripley & Heinrich 1960) and J. Vincent (*in* Irwin 1991), as well as a sight record from Angola (Dean *et al.* 1988) which requires verification. Subsequently, we are aware of just two sight records, one by Sinclair *et al.* (2007) in February 2005 from 40 km north of Calandula, Malanje Province, Angola, and one

by A. Hester (pers. comm.) in March 2009 from near Kolwezi, Lualaba Province, DRC. Neither sighting was documented with photographs, sound-recordings or detailed field notes.

Furthermore, there are conflicting reports concerning the species' habitat preferences and behaviour. Its habitat has been variously described as tall trees, not bushes in woodland (Neave 1910), dry woods, usually in the vicinity of grassy clearings (Ripley & Heinrich 1960) and climax *Brachystegia boehmii* woodland (Dean *et al.* 1988). The bird has been stated to feed in the branches and crowns of lower-stature trees (Ripley & Heinrich 1960), in the canopy of tall woodland (Dean *et al.* 1988, Sinclair *et al.* 2007) and low in the undergrowth (J. Vincent *in* Irwin 1991). Finally, there is some uncertainty surrounding its taxonomic status; the species has been suggested to be conspecific with Neddicky (Piping Cisticola) *C. fulvicapilla* and Long-tailed (Tabora) Cisticola



*C. angusticauda* (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1980); alternatively, it has been placed in a different genus (*Apalis*; Hall & Moreau 1970). In life Black-tailed Cisticola has been likened to an *apalis*, rather than to Neddicky or Long-tailed Cisticola (Irwin 1991, Sinclair *et al.* 2007).

In July–August 2010 we searched for Black-tailed Cisticola in north-east Angola, with the aim of photographing it, recording the species' vocalisations, studying its behaviour and, if possible, capturing one or more individuals to take genetic samples to be used to determine its phylogenetic position within the Cisticolidae.

## Methods

The precise location of all previous (specimen and sight record) localities (Irwin 1991, Dean *et al.* 1988, Dean 2000, Sinclair *et al.* 2007) and potential access routes were determined prior to our field work. Between 26 July and 3 August 2010 we spent nine days travelling to and visiting two areas from which there are reports of Black-tailed Cisticola, accessing the region from the west, along the main road from Luanda to Saurimo in Lunda Sul Province. Two days were spent *c.* 40 km north of Calandula, slowly searching miombo woodland and clearings at the edge of such woodland. There is a single sight record from this region (Sinclair *et al.* 2007), which is 210 km west of Cafunfo (08°46'11"S 17°59'49"E), the nearest locality from which a specimen is available.

From the Calandula area we continued east into the provinces of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul. We initially planned to visit the Cafunfo region along the Cuango River, the nearest area to Malanje from where a specimen has been collected. However, due to safety concerns as a result of the region being located within the main illicit diamond mining zone, we elected to concentrate our efforts on the Cacolo area (10°08'41"S 19°15'53"E), 200 km to the south-east. Three of the six Angolan specimens were collected from the vicinity of Cacolo, and a fourth is from nearby Mona Quimbundo (Irwin 1991).

On the afternoon of 31 July we followed the road from Cacolo south-west towards Cacumbi (10°16'57"S 19°02'55"E) for *c.* 23 km, stopping en route to search for Black-tailed Cisticola wherever the habitat seemed suitable. We camped adjacent to this road, on the edge of Sãoyaze village, *c.* 7.5

km south-west of Cacolo, for two nights, and erected six mist-nets (total length = 54 m) in the nearby woodland, where we found a group of Black-tailed Cisticolas. On 1 August we spent most of the day following the group of 6–8 Black-tailed Cisticolas as they foraged, observing their behaviour, recording their vocalisations and trapping one individual in a mist-net.

Sound-recordings were made using an Edirol R09 recorder and a Sennheiser MKE400 microphone. Measurements were obtained as follows: mass to the nearest 0.5 g using a Pesola spring balance; wing and tail length to the nearest 0.5 mm using a standard wing ruler; bill length, width and depth (height), and tarsus length to the nearest 0.1 mm with a digital calliper. These measurements were taken as follows: wing length (flattened), from the carpal joint to the tip of the longest primary; tail length, from the uropygial gland to the tip of the central rectrix; tarsus length, from the tibiotarsus joint to the distal end of the tarsometatarsus when the foot is held to the leg; upper mandible length, from where the culmen enters the feathers of the head to the tip; and bill width and depth at the anterior end of the nares. Blood samples were collected non-destructively from the brachial vein, together with three rectrices. Blood and feather samples were stored in absolute ethanol. Triplicate samples are held at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute (University of Cape Town, South Africa), at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California at Berkeley (South Africa), and at the Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos (University of Porto, Portugal).

## Results

No Black-tailed Cisticolas were found in the area *c.* 40 km north of Calandula, although Short-winged Cisticola *C. brachypterus*, Neddicky and Whistling Cisticola *C. lateralis* were all seen on several occasions.

In the Cacolo area, we almost immediately located a group of 6–8 Black-tailed Cisticolas feeding in the crowns of some lower-stature trees within dense miombo woodland near Sãoyaze village. On 31 July we observed the birds for 40 minutes as they moved through the area, made initial sound-recordings and took some record photographs. We also located a pair of Black-tailed Cisticolas 4.2 km distant at 10°12'35"S





**Figure 1.** The well-developed miombo woodland in which Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* was found 7.5 km south-east of Cacolo, Angola (Alexandre Vaz)

**Figura 1.** A mata madura de *Brachystegia* (miombo) na qual a cisticola-de-cauda-preta *Cisticola melanurus* foi encontrada, a 7.5 km a sudeste de Cacolo, Angola (Alexandre Vaz)

19°10'44"E, in the understorey of mature miombo woodland.

*Behaviour and habitat.*—The group of 6–8 birds spent the entire day within an area of c.2 ha of miombo woodland (Fig. 1). They moved together loosely, making it impossible to count the precise number of individuals or determine the exact age- and sex-composition of the group. Both adults and juveniles were present, and because all previous accounts suggest that the species lives in pairs (Irwin 1991), this may have been a breeding pair with several young from the previous breeding season. While they spent some time in mature, closed-canopy miombo woodland, the birds tended to forage in areas at the edge of well-developed woodland where the undergrowth was denser and the canopy cover sparser (Fig. 2). One of these more open areas was at the edge of a cassava field, which the birds flew across but did not forage in.

The cisticolas were seen to hop on the ground, forage in low, densely tangled vegetation, feed among the leaves in the canopy of the smaller trees (c.8 m above the ground), and also forage among the leaves in the canopy of the largest, emergent trees in the landscape (c.12 m above ground). The majority of their time was spent foraging low in dense undergrowth, especially in the morning, in the company of a pair of Tawny-flanked Prinias *Prinia subflava*. When disturbed the birds tended to fly into the canopy of the nearby trees.



**Figure 2.** The group of 6–8 Black-tailed Cisticolas *Cisticola melanurus* observed near Cacolo foraged preferentially in more open areas on the edge of miombo woodland and in clearings, where the canopy was more open and the undergrowth denser, although the birds also readily entered stands of dense woodland; we captured one individual in this mist-net (Martim Melo)

**Figura 2.** Um grupo de 6–8 cisticolas-de-cauda-preta *Cisticola melanurus* observado perto de Cacolo alimentava-se preferencialmente nas áreas mais abertas na borda da mata de miombo e em clareiras, onde a copa era mais aberta e o sub-bosque mais denso; no entanto, as aves também entravam regularmente nas zonas de mata mais densa; capturámos um indivíduo nesta rede (Martim Melo)

Besides the conspicuous noises made with the wings (described under Sounds), the most striking aspect of their behaviour was the way they held and moved their tails (Figs. 3–4). The tail was usually held below the horizontal, from which position it was constantly moved, both horizontally and vertically, in an apparently random fashion. They were not seen to flick their tails, nor their wings, as mentioned by Sinclair *et al.* (2007). Overall, they recalled Long-tailed Cisticola and, to a lesser degree, Neddicky, and the reported close similarity to members of the genus *Apalis* was not as apparent as we expected, based on the comments of other observers (Irwin 1991, Sinclair *et al.* 2007).

*Sounds.*—The descriptions of sounds presented here are based on sound-recordings made in the field, which are lodged at the Wildlife Section of The British Library Sound Archive. An edited summary track (131 seconds) was compiled using Goldwave software ([www.goldwave.com](http://www.goldwave.com)), and is to be used in conjunction with descriptions given below. The track is downloadable from [www.bird-sangola.org/downloads/](http://www.bird-sangola.org/downloads/) and [www.birdingafrica.org](http://www.birdingafrica.org).





**Figure 3.** Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* is similar in appearance to Neddicky *C. fulvicapilla* and Long-tailed (Tabora) Cisticola *C. angusticauda*; it has a rich rufous head, reddish-brown mantle and back, grey-brown wings and whitish underparts (Alexandre Vaz)

**Figura 3.** A cisticola-de-cauda-preta *Cisticola melanurus* é parecida com a cisticola-de-cabeça-ruiva *C. fulvicapilla* e com a cisticola-rabilonga *C. angusticauda*; a cabeça é de um ruivo intenso, o manto e dorso castanho-avermelhados, as asas cinzento-acastanhadas e as partes inferiores esbranquiçadas (Alexandre Vaz)



**Figure 4.** As its name suggests, Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* has a long, slender, all-black tail (Alexandre Vaz)

**Figura 4.** Como o seu nome indica, a cisticola-de-cauda-preta *Cisticola melanurus* tem uma longa e estreita cauda preta (Alexandre Vaz)

com/research/BlacktailedCisticola. Each section of the track (A–G) features a different recording and is separated by two seconds of silence.

While foraging in the undergrowth, birds were either silent for long periods or maintained

an almost continuous soft, weak *seep* call (section A, 49 seconds). This is probably the same call described by J. Vincent as a 'small 'wispingsqueak very like that uttered by the Blue Waxbill *Uraeginthus angolensis*' (in Irwin 1991). Sometimes a sharper *chip* (B, ten seconds) was also given. Both these calls are probably contact calls.

Perhaps the most distinctive sound is the clicking / wing-snapping sound made in flight (Neave 1910) (C, 2.6 seconds, D, 4.0 seconds, and E, 3.4 seconds), usually given in short bursts and not accompanied by any vocalisations. The birds often made this sound when disturbed and whilst flying up to a tree from the undergrowth, but appeared to also make it randomly at other times. Because J. Vincent did not note the wing-snapping behaviour during his observations in August, whereas observers in October and January did, Irwin (1991) commented that wing-snapping is perhaps seasonal. Our observations at the same time of the year as Vincent's, outside the presumed breeding season, suggest that the behaviour is neither linked to breeding season nor to a breeding display.

Finally, a fairly inconspicuous song was given infrequently (F, nine seconds, and G, 41 seconds), usually by a single individual, from the crown of a tall tree. It consisted of various short burry phrases, each lasting c.0.2 seconds, given at intervals of 1–6 seconds, and usually lasting at least 15 seconds but sometimes for several minutes. The song is quite unlike the piping call made by Neddicky or Long-tailed Cisticola.

**Plumage.**—A juvenile, for which age-class the plumage is undescribed (Urban *et. al.* 1997), was caught in a mist-net. It was similar to, although less brightly coloured than the adults (Figs. 3–4); the upperparts were more uniform, with the warm brown head grading into the brown mantle and back, and grey-brown wings (Figs. 5–7). As is characteristic of adults, it had a black tail (Fig. 7) and the rachis of the distal primaries appeared to be broadened and melanised (Fig. 6) as described by Ripley & Heinrich (1960). Measurements were as follows: mass = 7.0 g; wing length = 46.5 mm; tail length = 50 mm; tarsus length = 19.75 mm; bill length = 9.51 mm; bill width = 3.78 mm; bill depth = 3.16 mm.





**Figure 5.** The juvenile Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* captured in a mist-net; the upperparts are duller than those of the adult, with a warm brown head grading into a brown back and grey-brown wings (Alexandre Vaz)

**Figura 5.** O juvenil de cisticola-de-cauda-preta *Cisticola melanurus* capturado numa rede; as partes superiores são menos vivas que as dos adultos, com a cabeça e dorso castanhos e as asas cinzento-acastanhadas (Alexandre Vaz)



**Figure 6.** The juvenile Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* captured in a mist-net; the rachis of the five distal primaries is broad and black / melanised, and may be adapted to produce the wing-snapping sound characteristic of the species (Irwin 1991) (Alexandre Vaz)

**Figura 6.** O juvenil de cisticola-de-cauda-preta *Cisticola melanurus* capturado numa rede; a ráquis das cinco primárias externas é larga e preta (melanizada) o que pode constituir uma adaptação para a emissão dos estalidos produzidos pelo bater das asas, característico desta espécie (Irwin 1991) (Alexandre Vaz)

## Discussion

Although our observations were short in duration, they indicate that Black-tailed Cisticola forages at all levels, from the ground to the canopy of the tallest trees. In general, the species appears to inhabit mature, closed-canopy miombo woodland,



**Figure 7.** A dorsal view of the captured juvenile Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus*, showing the black tail (Alexandre Vaz)

**Figura 7.** Vista dorsal do juvenil de cisticola-de-cauda-preta *Cisticola melanurus* capturado numa rede, mostrando a cauda preta (Alexandre Vaz)

although within this habitat it appears to favour clearings and more open areas with a denser undergrowth. This habitat appeared to be quite widespread in the Cacolo area, with large tracts uninhabited by people and unmodified, making it unlikely that this species is currently threatened by habitat loss, at least locally. At present the species is known from a few scattered localities within its range. We believe this to be a result of incomplete sampling, rather than the species being restricted to specific localities with favourable habitat. However, more extensive surveys will be needed before this can be assumed to be the case.

In life, Black-tailed Cisticola has been compared by most observers to members of the genus *Apalis* (Irwin 1991, Sinclair *et al.* 2007). However, our impressions were that it was much more like Long-tailed Cisticola and to a lesser degree Neddicky, which are often thought to be Black-tailed Cisticola's closest relatives (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1980, Irwin 1991). Black-



tailed *Cisticola* has distinctive primary feathers and wing-snapping behaviour not shared by Neddicky or Long-tailed *Cisticola*. The distinctive song described herein further supports its recognition as a distinctive species and refutes the suggestion that it may be conspecific with Neddicky and / or Long-tailed *Cisticola* (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1980).

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# Discovery of a wintering site of Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* in Kafta-Sheraro National Park, Ethiopia

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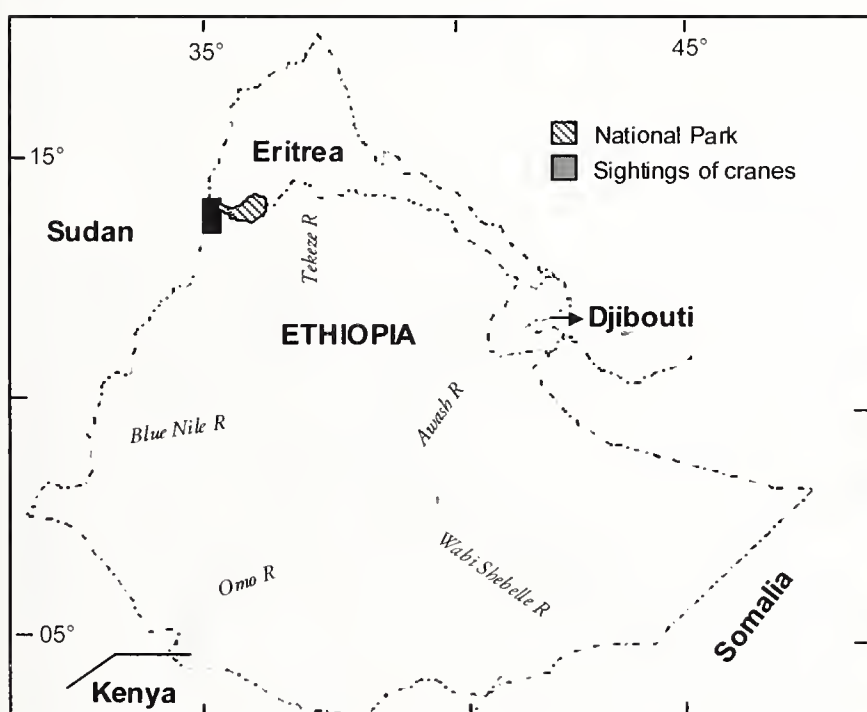
**Découverte d'un site d'hivernage de la Grue demoiselle *Anthropoides virgo* dans le Parc National de Kafta-Sheraro, Éthiopie.** Au cours d'une expédition vers le Parc National de Kafta-Sheraro (nord-ouest de l'Éthiopie à la frontière de l'Éritrée) du 26 mars au 16 avril 2009, plus de 21.500 Grues demoiselles *Anthropoides virgo* ont été comptées. Ce chiffre représente environ 9% de la population mondiale. C'est la première fois qu'on observe une telle concentration de Grues demoiselles en Éthiopie/Éritrée, ce qui suggère que la zone de Kafta-Sheraro sert de site d'hivernage pour l'espèce. La vallée de la Tekeze est donc une zone humide d'importance internationale.

**Summary.** During an expedition to Kafta-Sheraro National Park, in north-west Ethiopia on the border with Eritrea, from 26 March to 16 April 2009, more than 21,500 Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* were recorded, or c.9% of the world population of the species. This constitutes the first evidence of a large concentration of Demoiselle Cranes in Ethiopia/Eritrea, appears to confirm that the Kafta-Sheraro area serves as a wintering site for the species, and identifies this part of the Tekeze Valley as a wetland of international significance.

**K**afta-Sheraro, in north-west Ethiopia (13°50'–14°23'N 36°31'–37°29'E; Fig. 1), was recognised as a National Park in 2007 by the Regional Government of Tigray and is an Important Bird Area (EWNHS 1996). It has an estimated area of 5,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with mosaic woodlands of *Combretum–Terminalia*, *Acacia–Commiphora*, dry-evergreen montane, scrubland and riparian vegetation (Mekebebe *et al.* 2001). Within the park the Tekeze River is at an altitude

of c.500 m. In addition to its plant diversity, the park is home to many ungulates, predators and other species of mammals. The presence of African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*, Roan Antelope *Hippotragus equinus*, Greater Kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros* and Bohor Reedbuck *Redunca redunca* make the park and its environs a site of special significance. However, the park borders Eritrea and has not been well protected for the last decade as a result of the security situation.

From 26 March to 16 April 2009, an expedition was undertaken to assess the park's faunal diversity and the major threats. The team was composed of experts from the Natural Resources Sector of the Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau of Tigray Region, the Institute of Biodiversity Conservation, and Wildlife for Sustainable



**Figure 1.** Location of Kafta-Sheraro National Park and sightings of Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* in north-west Ethiopia.

Situation du Parc National de Kafta-Sheraro et des observations de Grues demoiselles *Anthropoides virgo* au nord-ouest de l'Éthiopie.



**Figure 2.** Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* at their roost on a sandbar in the Tekeze River, Kafta-Sheraro National Park, Ethiopia, March 2009 (Yirmed Demeke)

Grues demoiselles *Anthropoides virgo* dans leur dortoir sur un banc de sable dans la rivière Tekeze, Parc National de Kafta-Sheraro, Éthiopie, mars 2009 (Yirmed Demeke)





**Figure 3.** Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* leaving their roost in the Tekeze River, Kafta-Sheraro National Park, Ethiopia, March 2009 (Berihun Gebremedhin)

Grues demoiselles *Anthropoides virgo* quittant leur dortoir dans la rivière Tekeze, Parc National de Kafta-Sheraro, Éthiopie, mars 2009 (Berihun Gebremedhin)



**Figure 4.** Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* flying towards their feeding areas, north-west Ethiopia, March 2009 (Yirmed Demeke)

Grues demoiselles *Anthropoides virgo* volant vers leurs zones de nourrissage, Éthiopie, mars 2009 (Yirmed Demeke)

Development, a local NGO working mainly on elephant conservation in Ethiopia. In addition to five game scouts, members of the Ethiopian Defense Force accompanied the team to ensure its safety.

When, on 5 March 2009 at 06.00 hrs, large numbers of Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* were discovered leaving their apparent roost site in the Tekeze River, it was decided to conduct systematic counts to determine the total number of birds present.

### Methods

The cranes were counted from near the bridge over the Tekeze River on three consecutive mornings (5–7 March) between 05.30 and 07.15 hrs as they flew overhead in a south-westerly direction, after leaving their roost on a sandbank in the middle of the Tekeze (Figs. 2–4). Counts were made by BGM on the Ethiopian side and YD on the Eritrean side of the river, using binoculars. T. Atsebeha and B. Meressa assisted with recording.

### Results

The largest counts were made on the second and third days when 13,500 and 21,500 birds were counted. A maximum of 60 flocks was recorded with a maximum of 153 individuals in a flock.



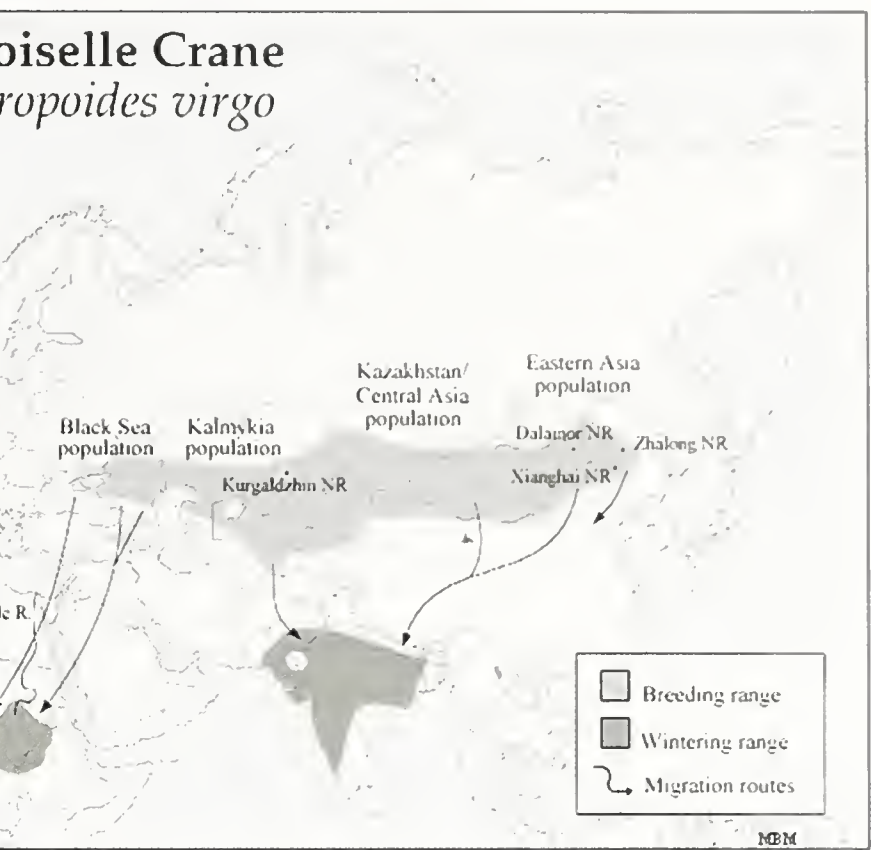
Nearly all of the flocks flew off south-west towards the agricultural fields around Humera (Ethiopia), while smaller numbers headed towards Om Hajer (Eritrea) and Hamdayt (Sudan). Only one flock of 30–40 Demoiselle Cranes was found away from the river, feeding in an open area with scattered *Balanites aegyptica* trees, c.5 km from Humera in the direction of Adebay. Other waterbirds seen roosting with the cranes included 113 Sacred Ibises *Threskiornis aethiopicus*, 185 Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, and smaller numbers of Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* and Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*.

As early March is the peak of the dry season, the Tekeze River was mostly dry with the remaining water being very shallow. The cranes' main roosting area was on a sandbank north-east of the Tekeze bridge and may well have extended north of this site for c.5 km along the river (Fig. 1). Local informants reported that the cranes usually arrive at Kafta-Sheraro in mid December and depart in April. The cranes are very noisy and because of this are disliked by people dwelling on the outskirts of Humera as the birds vocalise even in the middle of the night.

### Discussion

Demoiselle Crane breeds in Ukraine and north-east Turkey to Central Asia and Mongolia, and winters in north-east Africa and south Asia (Cramp & Simmons 1980, Meine & Archibald 1996, Francisco & Tommy 1999). The species formerly also occurred in north-west Africa and perhaps even in southern Spain, as well as Romania, but these populations have been extirpated (Snow & Perrins 1998, Thévenot *et al.* 2003). Demoiselle Cranes on migration have been recorded in the Nile Valley through September (Cramp & Simmons 1980). They cross the Red Sea and winter in Africa, mainly on the Blue and White Niles at c.09°–15°N, in October–February (Johnsgard 1983) (Fig. 5).

Migrants feed mainly on grain, but the species also preys on insects, worms, lizards and other small vertebrates. The birds forage in the morning



**Figure 5.** World breeding and wintering ranges, and migration routes, of Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* (after Meine & Archibald 1996).  
Aires mondiales de reproduction et d'hivernage et routes de migration de la Grue demoiselle *Anthropoides virgo* (d'après Meine & Archibald 1996).



**Figure 6.** Two adult Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* found dead at their roost site in the Tekeze River, Kafta-Sheraro National Park, Ethiopia, March 2009 (Yirmed Demeke).  
Deux Grues demoiselles *Anthropoides virgo* adultes trouvées mortes dans leur dortoir dans la rivière Tekeze, Parc National de Kafta-Sheraro, Éthiopie, mars 2009 (Yirmed Demeke)

and early afternoon, spending the rest of the day and night on open sandbars or at the margins of rivers (Ali & Ripley 1983).

Ash & Atkins (2009) considered Demoiselle Crane to be a rare Palearctic migrant with only three previous definite records in Ethiopia, from Lake Tana, Gallabat and Aseita, with a maximum of just two birds, and two records in Eritrea from Asmara and the Gieffa Plain, with a maximum of



three birds. Nikolaus (1987) describes the species as 'very common on passage in the north [of Sudan] in dry Acacia grassland, often near water. The wintering area is east of the Nile between 14°N [*sic*], but has not been fully detected yet'.

According to the Cranes Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan of IUCN Demoiselle Crane has a world population of 240,000 birds (Meine & Archibald 1996). Based on this figure, our counts of more than 21,500 Demoiselle Cranes comprise 9% of the estimated world population. Criterion 5 of the Ramsar Convention states that a wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds. Our observations and other anecdotal evidence suggest that the Tekeze River in Kafta-Sheraro National Park qualifies as a wetland site of international significance.

### Potential threats

The species appears to face a number of threats in the area adjacent to Kafta-Sheraro National Park. These include increased disturbance caused by human activities and direct persecution as a result of the crop damage the birds cause. We also noted a number of stray dogs hunting the cranes. Once a dog was seen struggling with an apparently sick crane in a shallow area of the river and eventually killed it. On another occasion two cranes were found dead in the middle of the roosting site (Fig. 6); the cause or causes of death are unknown.

Irrigated farming is the main activity along the Tekeze River. There are many irrigated plots on both sides of the river, which would definitely impact the cranes as any movement of people especially during late afternoon or early morning around their roosting sites is liable to cause disturbance. Local informants told us that, previously, the roost site in the Tekeze River was frequented by people fetching water for household consumption and bringing their cattle, sheep, goats and camels to drink. We were told that this practice continues but is less frequent than in the past, presumably due to the security situation. Indeed, it is possible that the security situation, which limits human activity in the area could be a factor protecting the species.

Further annual monitoring is recommended to determine whether the species regularly visits the site in large numbers and whether it does indeed overwinter there. In addition, studies should be

initiated to investigate its ecology, biology, habitat preferences and major threats.

### Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all of the government offices and individuals that collaborated in the field work. Field expenses were covered by the Institute of Biodiversity Conservation and the US Fish & Wildlife Service via its African Elephant Conservation Fund for Elephants of Kafta-Sheraro National Park. We also thank members of the Ethiopian Defense Force who ensured the safety of the team. John Atkins commented on an earlier version of this paper.

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# Largest-ever Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* colony

H. Dieter Oschadleus<sup>a</sup> and Dirk van Stuyvenberg<sup>b</sup>

**La plus importante colonie du Tisserin écarlate *Anaplectes rubriceps* jamais enregistrée.** Le Tisserin écarlate *Anaplectes rubriceps* niche normalement de façon solitaire, parfois en petites colonies. La colonie la plus importante enregistrée auparavant comprenait 100 nids. Nous avons trouvé une colonie qui comptait 210 nids, dont plusieurs étaient occupés, ce qui en fait la colonie la plus importante documentée à ce jour. Pendant une seule séance de baguage auprès de cette colonie, 73 Tisserins écarlates ont été capturés, y compris deux reprises de 2007. Les nids accessibles ne contenaient pas d'œufs ; neuf nids avaient deux jeunes chacun. Un nid contenait un jeune Coucou didric *Chrysococcyx caprius*.

**Summary.** Red-headed Weavers *Anaplectes rubriceps* normally nest solitarily, sometimes in small groups. The largest colony previously recorded held 100 nests. We found a colony that contained 210 nests, several of which were active, making this the largest colony documented to date. During a single ringing session at the colony, 73 free-flying Red-headed Weavers were caught including two recaptures from 2007. No eggs were found in those nests which were accessible; nine nests had two chicks each. One weaver nest contained a Didric Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* chick.

**R**ed-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* normally nests alone and sometimes in small groups. Colonies may contain several nests, although most are from previous seasons (Fry & Keith 2004). The largest colony recorded is 100 nests (Tyler 2004) with 40 nests recorded on two occasions (Irwin 1953, Ginn 1999). Here we describe a colony containing c.210 nests, several of which were active although it was at the end of the breeding season.

A team of ringers stayed at Platjan Farm on the Limpopo River, North West Province, South Africa, on 3–5 February 2010 to ring birds in the area. One aim was to ring Red-headed Weavers. Most Red-headed Weavers had completed breeding, but a large still-active colony was found on 3 February at Mayholme Farm, south of Platjan. Several hundred nests were noted around the main farmhouse. We decided to ring at this colony on the morning of 4 February and count the nests, being joined later by P. & D. D'Arcy, who initially ringed along the river with others. In the afternoon and on 5 February we searched nearby farms where smaller Red-headed Weaver colonies were present, but breeding had ended. This paper describes the colony and ringing effort at Mayholme Farm.

## Ringing

The colony was situated around the main farmhouse (22°29'58"S 28°47'27"E) at Mayholme Farm on the Limpopo River. We erected 84 m

of mist-nets around the house, between 05.30 and 12.00 hrs. Birds caught were: 73 Red-headed Weavers, 13 Cut-throat Finches *Amadina fasciata*, two Lesser Masked Weavers *Ploceus intermedius*, one recently fledged Didric Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* and 13 birds of other species that frequented the garden around the house. The Red-headed Weavers comprised 25 adult males and 36 adult females, 11 immatures and one very recently fledged juvenile. Immatures resembled adult females but had a dark tip to the maxilla.

Two birds were retrapped (FH37127, FH37130); both males that had been ringed on 18 July 2007. There were 12 captures here previously, in 2006–07 (SAFRING database), as incidental captures near the farmhouse (J. Heymans pers. comm.).

Two individuals showed plumage abnormalities. Male F35234 (Fig. 5) had an orange-yellow head rather than red (wing length confirmed the sex of this bird), and p10 (vestigial) in both wings was white in female F30018 (Fig. 6).

## Colony size and breeding

At 12.00 hrs the mist-nets were packed and a colony survey conducted. A total of 210 nests was counted around the house. Nests were mostly in trees but also on farmhouse structures; 159 nests were in a row of four wild *Burkea africana* in front of the house (Fig. 1), 37 in a baobab-like tree at the back (Fig. 2) and 14 on the house (nine on an aerial and its cable, and five on the roof edge).





**Figure 1.** Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* colony in front of Mayholme farmhouse, North West Province, South Africa, February 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

Colonie de Tisserins écarlates *Anaplectes rubriceps* en face de la ferme Mayholme, North West Province, Afrique du Sud, février 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

**Figure 2.** Part of Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* colony behind the Mayholme farmhouse, North West Province, South Africa, February 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

Une partie de la colonie de Tisserins écarlates *Anaplectes rubriceps* derrière la ferme Mayholme, North West Province, Afrique du Sud, février 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

**Figure 3.** Adult male Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*, North West Province, South Africa, February 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

Tisserin écarlate *Anaplectes rubriceps* mâle adulte, North West Province, Afrique du Sud, février 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

**Figure 4.** Adult female Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*, North West Province, South Africa, February 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

Tisserin écarlate *Anaplectes rubriceps* femelle adulte, North West Province, Afrique du Sud, février 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

Fifteen nests could be reached and nine of these contained chicks of varying ages. No eggs were found. The brood size of checked nests was consistently two chicks. Three nests contained chicks too small to ring (recently hatched or with their feathers still in pin) and one nest that could not be reached held two chicks seen begging at the entrance. Five nests contained chicks whose feathers were growing and could be ringed; one chick escaped and flew well to perch high in

another tree, thus nine chicks were ringed. One nest held a single well-feathered Didric Cuckoo chick, which was also ringed.

Nestling plumage has not previously been described in this species. The head of feathered chicks is golden yellow, unlike *Ploceus* weaver chicks, which tend to have olive-yellow feathers on the head. Bill was black with conspicuous cream-coloured gape flanges.





**Figure 5.** Adult male Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* with orange-yellow head, North West Province, South Africa, February 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

Tisserin écarlate *Anaplectes rubriceps* mâle adulte à tête jaune orange, North West Province, Afrique du Sud, février 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

**Figure 6.** Adult female Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* with white p10, North West Province, South Africa, February 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

Tisserin écarlate *Anaplectes rubriceps* femelle adulte avec p10 blanche, North West Province, Afrique du Sud, février 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

**Figure 7.** Recently fledged Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*, North West Province, South Africa, February 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

Tisserin écarlate *Anaplectes rubriceps* récemment sorti du nid, North West Province, Afrique du Sud, février 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

**Figure 8.** Chicks of Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*, North West Province, South Africa, February 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

Jeunes Tisserins écarlates *Anaplectes rubriceps*, North West Province, Afrique du Sud, février 2010 (H. D. Oschadleus)

## Discussion

### Ringling

Previously, 394 Red-headed Weavers had been ringed or re-trapped in southern Africa since 1950 (SAFRING database), so the work at the Mayholme colony provided a substantial increase in ringed individuals of the species and the largest number of Red-headed Weavers ringed in a single day. This is the second least ringed weaver (Ploceidae) in South Africa, after Dark-backed

Weaver *Ploceus bicolor*. These are also the first Red-headed Weaver chicks to have been ringed in southern Africa (one has been ringed in Zambia).

Sage (1969) examined three Red-headed Weaver specimens in the National Museum of Bulawayo (Zimbabwe) with abnormal plumages. In two the red plumage was replaced by yellow and orange feathering and in the third the red was paler than normal. Webster (1955) noted a male with an orange head nest building.



### Colony size

Irwin (1953) found a colony of at least 40 nests at Gatooma [=Kadoma], in central Zimbabwe, and commented on the large size of this colony, compared to the usual 3–4 nests. Subsequently, Ginn (1999) noted larger-than-normal colonies in the south-east lowveld of Zimbabwe, e.g. at Gonarezhou and in the Limpopo Valley, with 30–40 nests in a single tree. At Gonarezhou he observed four males building in one colony and he counted 19 nests. Tyler (2004) found a colony of c.100 nests in a baobab tree on the slopes of the Matadela Hills, near Gobojango, Botswana, of which c.40 nests were active. All the above authors noted how unusual large colonies are in this species.

The colony at Mayholme is considered to represent a single colony of 210 nests, making this the largest colony documented for the species. If, however, the nests in front of the house are considered a separate colony to those behind it, this remains the largest colony with 159 nests in just four trees, 105 of these in one tree.

### Breeding

Mean clutch size reported for Red-headed Weaver is 2.6 (Fry & Keith 2004). All nests we checked had two chicks, irrespective of the ages of the chicks; possibly late clutches are smaller.

Didric Cuckoo parasitism of Red-headed Weavers has occasionally been recorded and Payne & Payne (1967) calculated a parasitism rate of 3% in this species. It is probable that the free-flying cuckoo was raised by Red-headed Weavers, giving two records of cuckoo parasitism for the Mayholme colony.

Cut-throat Finches are known to breed and roost in weaver nests, including those of Red-headed Weavers (Fry & Keith 2004). The

Cut-throat Finches at Mayholme were only caught during the first net round, indicating that they were roosting in weaver nests and not breeding at the time of our visit.

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# Status of Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* in south-west Madagascar

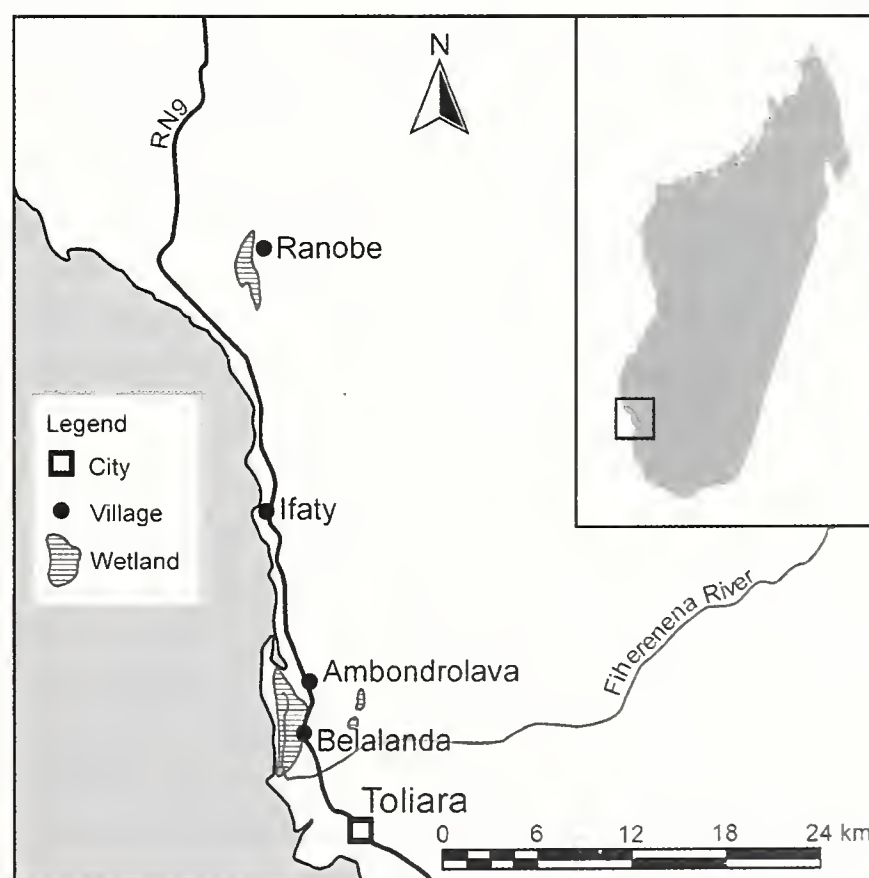
Charlie J. Gardner<sup>a</sup> and Louise D. Jasper<sup>b</sup>

**Résumé.** L'avifaune de Madagascar est riche en espèces endémiques mais pauvre en espèces migratrices et seuls quatre passereaux paléarctiques sont connus de l'île. Parmi ces espèces, l'Hirondelle rustique *Hirundo rustica* est la plus commune bien qu'elle soit considérée par plusieurs auteurs comme étant une espèce migratrice irrégulière ou erratique. Nous présentons plusieurs observations d'Hirondelles rustiques dans le sud-ouest de Madagascar que nous avons réalisées de janvier à mars 2010 qui nous permettent d'élucider le statut de l'espèce dans la région. Nous avons observé des hirondelles perchées dans les marais du lac Ranobe à quatre reprises entre le 29 janvier et le 20 février 2010, mais aucune hirondelle n'était présente sur le site le 19 mars 2010. Nous avons également réalisé six autres observations d'Hirondelles rustiques dans d'autres sites de la région (à Ranobe et près des complexes humides de Belalanda et d'Ambondrolava) au cours de cette période. Des enquêtes menées auprès des villageois riverains du marais du lac Ranobe indiquent que l'espèce n'apparaît que pendant la saison des pluies mais depuis longtemps. Nous proposons donc de considérer que l'Hirondelle rustique n'est pas une espèce migratrice erratique mais plutôt une espèce migratrice régulière dans la région et localisée aux zones humides. Nos observations soulignent l'importance régionale du lac Ranobe pour la conservation des oiseaux.

Madagascar is well known for its low avian species richness but extraordinary rates of endemism, with 51% of the 209 breeding species being endemic to the island (a figure unparalleled in any major landmass; Goodman & Hawkins 2008). A second noteworthy pattern in the avifauna is the relatively low number of migratory species; a recent review (Goodman & Hawkins 2008) lists just 32 species of either regular or accidental Palearctic migrants, dominated by the Charadriidae (five species), Scolopacidae (16) and Sternidae (four). Only two terrestrial birds, Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* and Sooty Falcon *F. concolor*, are known to be regular visitors, while only four migratory Palearctic passerines have been recorded—Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Common Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* and, most recently, Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (Koenig 2009). The latter three are clearly rare vagrants; this note concerns the status of Barn Swallow, suggesting that it may be less scarce than previously thought.

Barn Swallows in southern Africa are abundant austral summer visitors, breeding mainly in Europe and Russia (Hockey *et al.* 2005); a similar origin is likely for birds in Madagascar. Although the most regularly recorded of the migratory Palearctic passerines, its status on Madagascar remains unclear, and most authors consider it to

be a vagrant or irregular migrant (Langrand 1990, Morris & Hawkins 1998, Sinclair & Langrand 1998). Although records are available throughout the country, e.g. the north-east (Langrand 1990) and south-east (Goodman *et al.* 1997), they appear to be concentrated in the south-west (Morris & Hawkins 1998; R. Safford pers. comm.): six of the eight records mentioned by Langrand &



**Figure 1.** Map of the region showing locations mentioned in the text.

Carte de la région indiquant les localités mentionnées dans le texte.



Sinclair (1994) come from this region, of which four are from around Toliara and Ifaty (see Fig. 1). All but one of these is from October–March. Further records from the region include a flock of 20 at Lac Ranobe in November 1994 (Anon. 1995). Here we present several observations of Barn Swallows from Atsimo-Andrefana (Toliara), south-west Madagascar, and supplement these with local ethno-ornithological data, in an attempt to clarify the status of the species in the region.

### Barn Swallow observations in 2010

On 29 January 2010 at 18.48 hrs, while returning from field work in the forests east of Lac Ranobe (Fig. 1), we observed a flock of *c.*300 hirundines gathering over the reedbeds on the east side of the lake. The flock was composed primarily of Barn Swallows, with a few Mascarene Martins *Phedina borbonica* also present. The birds flew over the reedbeds in a coherent flock at a height of *c.*50 m for several minutes, and were augmented by small groups of birds arriving from the south and east. At 19.02 hrs (soon after sunset), the flock rapidly descended into the reeds, so that all birds disappeared within a matter of seconds. The roost was *c.*150 m north-west of the village of Ranobe Anivo (23°01'02"S 43°36'29"E), in reedbeds dominated by *Typha angustifolia* (known locally as *vondro*) and *Phragmites mauritianus* (*bararata*). We observed the roosting of this flock on three further occasions, on 2, 6 and 20 February, during which we estimated the flock to comprise 300–800 individuals, their number increasing with time. None was present when we revisited the site on 19 March. The birds were identified as Barn Swallows based on their unstreaked white underparts and underwings, chestnut throat patches and, when seen flying low over the ground, the blue iridescence to the back and wings.

We also recorded small groups of Barn Swallows or singles away from the roost during the same period as follows.

During a total of eight road trips along the Route Nationale 9 (RN9) between the wetland complexes of Belalanda and Ambondrolava (Fig. 1), we recorded a single on 17 January 2010, three separate individuals on 19 January, and one on 10 March. All birds were foraging around or near the edges of wetlands adjacent to the road.

On 28 January, at a forest site *c.*2 km east of the roost at Lac Ranobe (23°00'54"S 43°37'22"E), we observed four Barn Swallows in a flock with seven Mascarene Martins; they flew west over the forest at 17.32 hrs, and we therefore presume them to have been heading towards the lake roost.

On 22 March at a site *c.*400 m west of Lac Ranobe (23°00'54"S 43°35'58"E), we observed a flock of three Barn Swallows flying west.

On 2 April, LDJ observed *c.*15 Barn Swallows foraging low over sparsely vegetated sand dunes adjacent to the brackish lake complex of Belalanda.

### Local knowledge of the swallows' presence

We supplemented our observational data by interviewing seven villagers (in two groups) from Ranobe Anivo (on 19 March 2010) and two villagers from Ankilibodida, *c.*1 km south of Ranobe Anivo on the east side of the lake (on 30 January 2010). We concentrated our interviews on older members of the community, presenting them with illustrations from field guides and descriptions of the species' roosting behaviour using local interpreters. All interviewees knew the bird, which is known locally as *kely befor* (= little [bird] with big backside), and were able to accurately describe its behaviour both at and away from the roost. All stated that the birds are only present during the rainy season (which typically lasts from November to March: Seddon *et al.* 2000), with one suggesting that the species responds rapidly to rains, often arriving immediately following storms. While most interviewees agreed that the roost was always in the same location (in the tallest, densest stand of *Phragmites mauritianus*), one claimed that the birds varied the location of the roost on a near-daily basis, and that the flock would sometimes divide into two or more groups to roost. All interviewees stated that the roost had been present for as long as they could remember, and that it had always been of a similar size, suggesting that it does not represent a recent increase in the numbers of migratory birds.

On 19 March 2010, when no hirundines were present at the roost, we questioned villagers as to when the flock had disappeared. One interviewee reported that the flock had left *c.*1 week previously, while the others agreed that the time of departure had in fact been three days earlier. The latter date



corresponds to the end of four days of heavy rain associated with tropical depression Hubert, which passed east of the region on 13–14 March (Météo France 2010), and also corresponds to the time of departure of the majority of Sooty Falcons from the site. These raptors had been abundant in deforested areas west of the lake in previous weeks, foraging in loose flocks of up to 25 birds in the evenings and following rain, but few individuals remained beyond 16 March.

Having undertaken several (unrelated) in-depth, semi-structured interviews concerning the hunting of forest and lake birds with men from both villages, we have a high degree of confidence in the reliability of local ethno-ornithological knowledge. All men interviewed, for example, stated that the introduced Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* had been present in the village only for c.10–15 years (CJG unpubl. data), which corresponds to scientific knowledge from elsewhere (see Sueur 1996).

## Conclusion

Our observations, coupled with local knowledge of the birds and several historical records from the south-west region, lead us to suggest that the paucity of records of Barn Swallows in Madagascar is probably an artefact resulting from the relative lack of observers rather than the irregularity of the species (as suggested for migrants in general by Hawkins & Goodman 2003). We therefore suggest that the species is a regular, if highly localised, migrant concentrated around wetlands in the south-west. Our observations of Barn Swallows around wetland complexes south of Ranobe, and lack of records from areas away from wetlands, suggest that the species may be tied to such habitats within the region, whether for foraging or roosting or both. We did not have the opportunity to search for roosts at either Belalanda or Ambondrolava, and therefore do not know whether the birds we observed at these sites dispersed daily from the roost at Ranobe (c.30 km north of Ambondrolava), or whether they were members of separate roosts. If Barn Swallows are indeed tied to wetlands within the region, the lack of records from the much larger and more bird-rich wetlands in the west of the country may be considered surprising. Several authors (Young & Safford 1995, Tingay & Gilbert 1999, Willard &

Goodman 2002, Raherilalao & Wilmé 2008) have published bird inventories from such sites without recording Barn Swallows, but such surveys have generally been during the austral winter when migrants are absent, and problems of access during the rainy season hinder ornithological research during such periods. Surveys of these wetlands during appropriate periods may yield additional Barn Swallow roosts.

Although widespread migratory species assume lower conservation importance than the country's endemics, the finding of Madagascar's only known roost of Barn Swallows further highlights the regional conservation importance of Lac Ranobe and its reedbeds within the context of the sub-arid south of the country. Gardner *et al.* (2009a) recorded 32 species of wetland birds from the site, of which nine (Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*, Great Egret *E. alba*, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*, African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus* and Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*) have very restricted or local distributions in the south. The wetlands currently receive no formal protection at the national level, although WWF is leading efforts to expand the limits of the PK32-Ranobe temporary protected area to include the Ranobe wetlands as well as several other key habitats (see Gardner *et al.* 2009b) as part of the country's ambitious tripling of the protected area system (known as the Durban Vision: Norris 2006). We believe the existence of Madagascar's only known roost of Barn Swallows adds further scientific justification to the expansion of the protected area limits to include Lac Ranobe before definitive protected area status is granted.

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# Sightings of Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* in the far north of Cameroon

Ralph Buij

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**Observations de Faucons concolores *Falco concolor* dans l'extrême nord du Cameroun.** Des observations sont rapportées d'au moins six Faucons concolores *Falco concolor* immatures dans l'extrême nord du Cameroun, en mai et juillet 2010. Les faucons attrapaient des insectes pendant et après des orages saisonniers. Les données pour cette espèce en Afrique de l'Ouest sont très rares. L'auteur suggère que certains Faucons concolores traversent l'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale en route vers leurs aires de reproduction, comme le Faucon d'Éléonore *F. eleonora*. En été, les jeunes Faucons concolores peuvent être particulièrement attirés par les pluies en Afrique de l'Ouest.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* is considered a rare Palearctic vagrant to western Africa (Borrow & Demey 2001). Confirmed records exist for eastern Chad in May and June. In addition, four to five Sooty Falcons were observed at several locations in and around the northern Aïr Mountains in Niger, between July and September; at least one was in its second calendar year (NiBDaB 2010). These constitute the only summer records for the region. The following describes observations made by the author of Sooty Falcons in northernmost Cameroon in May and July 2010.

On 1 May 2010, I photographed a Sooty Falcon south of the village of Rhumsiki in the Kapsiki Mountains (10°40'N 13°56'E; 1,100 m; Fig. 1). Temperature was 35°C with clear skies; the first seasonal rains had fallen several days earlier. The falcon was hawking insects at 13.27 hrs at 150–200 m above ground and moved off north-west. Its plumage was uniform bluish grey, including the flight feathers; the cere and feet were yellow. The ochre cheeks and chin and the dark moustachial indicated the bird was probably in its third calendar-year, or perhaps older (Forsman 1999). The habitat consisted of undulating hills and rocky outcrops with cultivation, *Combretum* and *Terminalia* shrubland and scattered villages. Several Eurasian Hobbies *F. subbuteo* were observed hawking insects in the same area that day.

Between 7 and 28 July 2010, I observed at least five Sooty Falcons near the village of Waza, south of Lake Chad and close to Waza National Park in northern Cameroon (11°40'N 14°57'E; 300 m). Photographs of at least four different individuals indicated they had barred, i.e. juvenile-type, flight feathers and relatively short wings (especially the

'hand'), suggesting they were in their second calendar-year (Forsman 1999). All observations were made near or from three granite outcrops, which constitute the only higher ground in this relatively flat area and which rise to 400–500 m. Surrounding habitat consists of seasonally flooded grassy plains, interspersed by cultivation (millet, sorghum), small villages, and higher lying *Sclerocarya birrea* and *Anogeissus leiocarpus* tree savanna, *Combretum* and *Terminalia* shrubs, and stands of *Hyphaena thebaica*. *Acacia seyal* tree savanna on black clay soils is saturated with water in the rainy season. Rainfall (May–September) is irregular with an annual mean of 700 mm. From June, the area received above average rainfall, with rains at least every 2–3 days continuing into July. As a result, much of the surrounding grassy plains were permanently inundated.

On 7 July, two Sooty Falcons were hawking insects and 'playfully' chasing each other above the rocky outcrops. They were seen around 17.00 hrs in overcast conditions after a day of heavy rain. Other raptors simultaneously hawking insects above the outcrops included several juvenile Lanner Falcons *F. biarmicus*, two African Hobbies *F. cuvierii* and 12 Fox Kestrels *F. alopex*. On 16–18 July, at least two Sooty Falcons were seen infrequently at the same location, mostly in the afternoon, at 16.30–18.30 hrs, when they were hawking insects together around the outcrops (Fig. 2). Once, a Sooty Falcon was seen at 07.34 hrs. On 19 July, a group of five Sooty Falcons were hawking insects together at 16.35 hrs, after a day of heavy rain.

On 24–25 July, up to three Sooty Falcons were seen together from the highest rocky outcrop in the area (500 m), which was visited for the





**Figure 1.** Third calendar-year or older Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, 13 km south of Rhumsiki, Cameroon, 1 May 2010. Note long wings and uniform flight feathers (Ralph Buij)

Faucon concolore *Falco concolor* de troisième année ou plus, 13 km au sud de Rhumsiki, Cameroun, 1 mai 2010. Noter les longues ailes et les rémiges uniformes (Ralph Buij)

**Figure 2.** Second calendar-year Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*; the mantle, rump and head feathers have been moulted, but note the retained juvenile upperwing-coverts, remiges and rectrices, Waza, Cameroon, 17 July 2010 (Ralph Buij)

Faucon concolore *Falco concolor* de deuxième année ; les plumes du manteau, du croupion et de la tête ont été muées, mais noter les couvertures alaires, rémiges et rectrices juvéniles, Waza, Cameroun, 17 juillet 2010 (Ralph Buij)

**Figure 3.** Second calendar-year Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* stooping at a dragonfly, Waza, Cameroon, 24 July 2010 (Ralph Buij)

Faucon concolore *Falco concolor* de deuxième année piquant vers une libellule, Waza, Cameroun, 24 juillet 2010 (Ralph Buij)

**Figure 4.** Second calendar-year Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*; the same individual as in Fig. 3, hawking insects above a rocky outcrop, Waza, Cameroon, 24 July 2010 (Ralph Buij)

Faucon concolore *Falco concolor* de deuxième année ; le même individu de la Fig. 3, chassant des insectes au-dessus d'un affleurement rocheux, Waza, Cameroun, 24 juillet 2010 (Ralph Buij)

entire day on both dates (Figs. 3–9). A Sooty Falcon appeared around 14.30 hrs on 24 July, in fine weather coinciding with the development of a distant rainstorm. It was hawking insects at very close range, pursuing prey in rapid flight among the boulders at the top of the hill, and dismembering and consuming insects in flight.

Prey included dragonflies and alate termites, possibly also locusts. It often stooped at great speed from 50–70 m up, twice at dragonflies. Other raptors attracted to the insect food included two African Hobbies, a single Grey Kestrel *F. ardosiaceus* and several Lanner Falcons and Fox Kestrels. After 20 minutes, the Sooty Falcon flew





**Figure 5.** Second calendar-year Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*; the moult of the body feathers is less advanced than in the bird depicted in Figs. 3–4, Waza, Cameroon, 24 July 2010 (Ralph Buij)

Faucon concolore *Falco concolor* de deuxième année ; la mue des plumes du corps est moins avancée que chez l'oiseau des Figs. 3–4, Waza, Cameroun, 24 juillet 2010 (Ralph Buij)

**Figure 6.** Second calendar-year Sooty Falcons *Falco concolor* 'playfully' chasing each other, Waza, Cameroon, 24 July 2010 (Ralph Buij)

Faucons concolores *Falco concolor* de deuxième année se poursuivant apparemment pour jouer, Waza, Cameroun, 24 juillet 2010 (Ralph Buij)

**Figure 7.** Second calendar-year Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, Waza, Cameroon, 24 July 2010 (Ralph Buij)  
Faucon concolore *Falco concolor* de deuxième année, Waza, Cameroun, 24 juillet 2010 (Ralph Buij)

**Figure 8.** Second calendar-year Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, Waza, Cameroon, 25 July 2010 (Ralph Buij)  
Faucon concolore *Falco concolor* de deuxième année, Waza, Cameroun, 25 juillet 2010 (Ralph Buij)

off in the direction of the rainstorm. Two more Sooty Falcons appeared 30 minutes later and after some time spent hawking insects near the top of the hill, also moved off in the direction of the storm. Three Sooty Falcons—probably the same individuals—were seen higher up at 16.00 hrs, hawking insects in the rain, by which time other falcons had ceased their hunting activities. Three Sooty Falcons were again seen together at the same location on 25 July, around 13.00 hrs, in light rain. After several minutes they moved off to forage above the distant flooded grasslands.

The last observation of a Sooty Falcon was made on 28 July at 15.20 hrs; this bird was seen only briefly after it had started raining. No further visits were made to the area after 28 July.

## Discussion

Despite five years of intensive raptor studies by myself and various year-round bird surveys by others during the past 20 years, these are the first observations of Sooty Falcons in Cameroon. Thiollay (1977) did not observe the species during his seven years of raptor studies between





**Figure 9.** Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* habitat, a rocky outcrop of 500 m elevation in otherwise flat terrain; the falcons chased insects among the boulders and also visited the distant inundated grasslands, Waza, Cameroon, 24 July 2010 (Ralph Buij)

Habitat du Faucon concolore *Falco concolor*, un affleurement rocheux de 500 m de haut au milieu d'un terrain par ailleurs plat ; les faucons chassaient les insectes parmi les rochers et se rendaient également vers les prairies inondées lointaines, Waza, Cameroun, 24 juillet 2010 (Ralph Buij)

Mauritania and Cameroon. The Sooty Falcons in Niger were only recorded in one out of 12 years of bird studies, following heavy rains which resulted in a superabundance of locusts (J. Newby pers. comm.). Sooty Falcons may only visit western Africa infrequently and perhaps only when heavy rains trigger a rich supply of food. Their frequency of occurrence may be under-estimated, however, due to the scarcity of observers.

It is important to note, in this respect, the paucity of observations of the ecologically similar Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonora* in western Africa. Intensive raptor surveys resulted in a single observation of Eleonora's Falcon in northern Cameroon (RB pers. obs.) and another in the south (Hivekovics & Palatitz 1998), while there are only three records elsewhere in the region: single black-morph individuals at the Banc d'Arguin, north-west Mauritania, in November and January (Lamarche 1988, Meininger *et al.* 1990), and a bird video-taped in Mount Peko National Park, Côte d'Ivoire, in March (G. Rondeau *in Bull. ABC* 8: 147). Recent satellite transmitter studies have revealed, however, that West and Central Africa—especially Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic and Congo-

Kinshasa—are routinely crossed by Eleonora's Falcons en route to and from their breeding grounds in the western Mediterranean (Gschweng *et al.* 2008, Lopez-Lopez *et al.* 2010). The third calendar-year Sooty Falcon seen in May in northern Cameroon was perhaps following a similar migratory route, although it was slightly west of the expected flight path, given the location of the westernmost known breeding grounds of Sooty Falcons in eastern Libya.

The Eleonora's Falcon satellite studies revealed the over-summering of juvenile Eleonora's Falcons on the African continent, away from the breeding grounds (Gschweng *et al.* 2008). The very low proportion of subadult Sooty Falcons at some breeding colonies, such as in Oman (M. McGrady *in litt.* 2010), suggests young Sooty Falcons also summer away from their breeding colonies. Similar to Eleonora's, summering Sooty Falcons may range widely on the African continent, tracking strong rains and the superabundance of prey that they bring. Observations of Sooty Falcons in eastern and southern Africa, including Madagascar, during July–October are extremely rare; only a handful were reported from Tanzania during this period, some of which may have been misidentified Grey Kestrels (N. Baker *in litt.* 2010). The Sooty Falcons observed in northern Cameroon in July, and in Niger in July–August suggest that summering Sooty Falcons may be particularly attracted to good rains in this part of Africa.

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## An attack by a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* on a Guttural Toad *Amietophrynus gutturalis*

Gerrut Norval<sup>a</sup> and Dirk Stevens<sup>b</sup>

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### Une attaque d'une Huppe fasciée *Upupa epops* sur un Crapaud guttural *Amietophrynus gutturalis*.

Le 20 novembre 2008, une Huppe fasciée *Upupa epops* a été observée donnant des coups de bec violents à un Crapaud guttural *Amietophrynus gutturalis* adulte sur la pelouse d'un jardin urbain à Springs, Gauteng, Afrique du Sud. Le crapaud était clairement mort depuis peu, peut-être à cause de l'attaque de la Huppe. Ceci semble être la première donnée concernant une Huppe fasciée attaquant un Crapaud guttural.

On 20 November 2008, DS noticed a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* pecking vigorously at a relatively large object c.10 m from him on his lawn in Springs, east of Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa. He went into the house to retrieve his camera, and when he returned the Hoopoe was foraging a short distance from the object, which appeared to be an anuran. The Hoopoe suddenly returned to the motionless anuran and pecked at its head and body quite vigorously (Figs. 1–2) for the next two minutes, after which it resumed foraging for a short period before flying away. Examination of the anuran (Fig. 3) revealed that it was a Guttural Toad *Amietophrynus gutturalis*, one of the commonest anurans in southern Africa, which is often found near buildings in towns

and suburbs (Channing 2001). The animal died very recently, possibly as a result of the Hoopoe's attack, as its blood had not yet coagulated and *rigor mortis* had not yet set in.

It is unclear why the Hoopoe pecked at the toad. No other Hoopoes were observed in the immediate vicinity, and no nest holes were found in the garden, so it was unlikely a defensive action. Hoopoes feed primarily on large insects, their larvae and pupae, and other invertebrates, and the species occasionally hawks flying termites, although they are also known to take small vertebrates, such as lizards, snakes and frogs (Krištín 2001, Hockey *et al.* 2005). However, due to the toad's size (snout–vent length c.7 cm), it seems unlikely that the animal would





**Figures 1–2.** Hoopoe *Upupa epops* pecking at Guttural Toad *Amietophrynus gutturalis*, Springs, Gauteng, South Africa, 20 November 2008 (Dirk Stevens)

Huppe fasciée *Upupa epops* donnant des coups de bec violents à un Crapaud guttural *Amietophrynus gutturalis*, Springs, Gauteng, Afrique du Sud, 20 novembre 2008 (Dirk Stevens)

have constituted ‘normal’ prey for the Hoopoe. However, the toad was possibly weakened or dying, and as a result may have been regarded by the Hoopoe as a possible prey item.

As far as can be determined, this appears to be the first reported description of such an attack by a Hoopoe on a Guttural Toad.



**Figure 3.** The Guttural Toad *Amietophrynus gutturalis* after the Hoopoe *Upupa epops* had abandoned its attack, Springs, South Africa, 20 November 2008 (Dirk Stevens); the injury to the left hind limb illustrates the severity of the attack, although it would not have resulted in the death of the toad.

Le Crapaud guttural *Amietophrynus gutturalis* après que la Huppe fasciée *Upupa epops* avait abandonné son attaque, Springs, Gauteng, Afrique du Sud, 20 novembre 2008 (Dirk Stevens) ; la blessure au membre postérieur gauche illustre la sévérité de l’attaque, quoique cette blessure n’ait pas causé la mort du crapaud.

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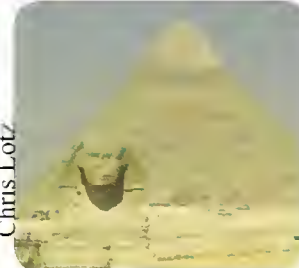
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2011

<div> <p>April</p>  <p>Hugh Chittenden</p> <p>South Africa</p> </div>	<div> <p>May</p>  <p>Chris Perrins</p> <p>Ghana</p> </div>	<div> <p>June</p>  <p>Niall Perrins</p> <p>Zambia</p> </div>	<div> <p>June</p>  <p>Niall Perrins</p> <p>Tanzania</p> </div>
<div> <p>July</p>  <p>Niall Perrins</p> <p>Uganda</p> </div>	<div> <p>July</p>  <p>Niall Perrins</p> <p>Kenya</p> </div>	<div> <p>September</p>  <p>Martin Benadie</p> <p>Namibia</p> </div>	<div> <p>October</p>  <p>Adrian Biers</p> <p>South Africa</p> </div>
<div> <p>November</p>  <p>Ian Merrill</p> <p>Madagascar</p> </div>	<div> <p>November</p>  <p>Niall Perrins</p> <p>Botswana</p> </div>	<div> <p>December</p>  <p>Niall Perrins</p> <p>Mozambique</p> </div>	<div> <p>Anytime Tours Anywhere</p> </div>

2012

<div> <p>January</p>  <p>Martin Benadie</p> <p>South Africa</p> </div>	<div> <p>February</p>  <p>Maans Booysse</p> <p>Ethiopia</p> </div>	<div> <p>March</p>  <p>Niall Perrins</p> <p>Zimbabwe</p> </div>	<div> <p>May</p>  <p>Chris Lotz</p> <p>Egypt</p> </div>
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# First breeding record for Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* in Libya

Jens Hering<sup>a</sup> and Elmar Fuchs<sup>b</sup>

**Première donnée sur la nidification du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* en Libye.** Aux printemps 2008 et 2010, des Blongios nains *Ixobrychus minutus* ont été observés avec des nids contenant des œufs dans les régions de Cyrénaïque et Tripolitaine de Libye. Ce sont les premières données de nidification en Libye, et le Blongios nain niche peut être régulièrement dans les habitats aquatiques du pays.

In North Africa, the Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* is known to breed in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, although data are scanty due to the difficulty of establishing reliable evidence (Goodman & Meininger 1989, Isenmann & Moali 2000, Thévenot *et al.* 2003, Isenmann *et al.* 2005). To date, there have been no breeding records in Libya. According to Bundy (1976) the species is frequently observed in Tripolitania in March–May and less frequently in August–October. Most sightings are in coastal wadis. In Cyrenaica it occurs infrequently in the coastal region in April–May. In Fezzan only occasional

sightings are available. Additional spring records are mentioned by Brehme *et al.* (2002).

On 6 May 2010, while searching for Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus* ssp. nests in the Common Reed *Phragmites australis* beds of a lake south of Bu Tesira recreational park, north Benghazi (32°09'N 20°08'E; Figs. 1–2) (*cf.* Hering *et al.* 2010) we found a Little Bittern nest in c.4 m-tall old reeds on the west shore (Figs. 3–4). The 'clumsily' built nest, located c.1 m above water level in the layer of bent reeds, contained four eggs still warm from brooding. The nest was c.2 m from open water and 3 m from the stony, bare



**Figures 1–2.** Breeding site of Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*: lake lined with reeds south of Bu Tesira recreational park, Benghazi, Cyrenaica, Libya, 30 April 2010 (J. Hering)

Site de nidification du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* : un lac bordé de roseaux au sud du parc Bu Tesira, Benghazi, Cyrénaïque, Libye, 30 avril 2010 (J. Hering)

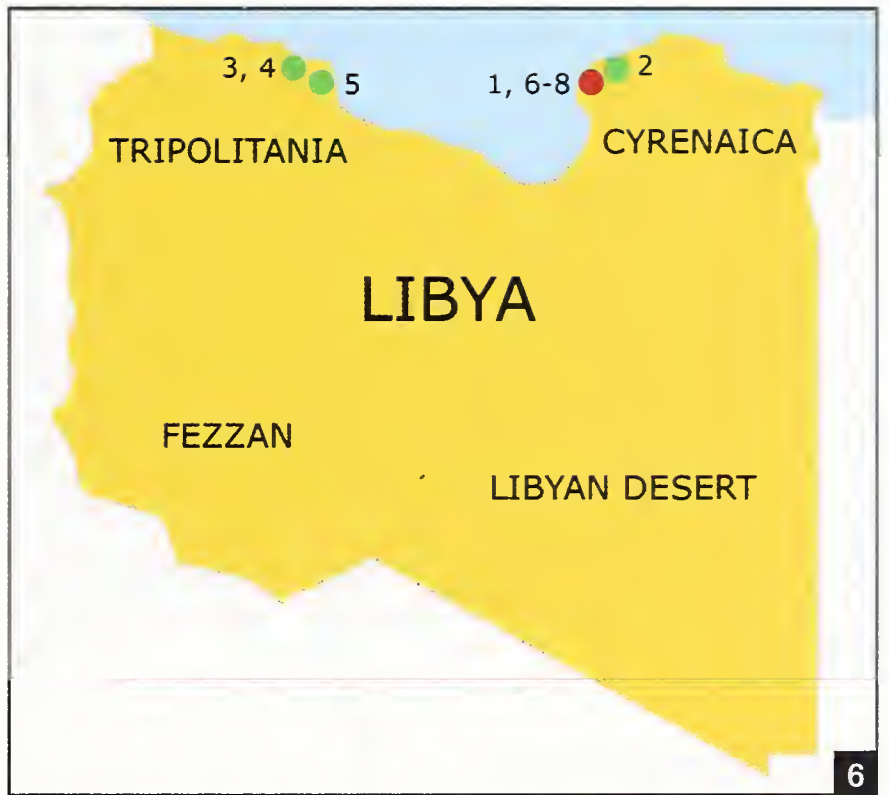
**Figures 3–4.** Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* nest in reeds at the lake south of Bu Tesira recreational park, Benghazi, Cyrenaica, Libya, 6 May 2010 (J. Hering)

Nid du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* dans des roseaux du lac au sud du parc Bu Tesira, Benghazi, Cyrénaïque, Libye, 6 mai 2010 (J. Hering)

**Figure 5.** Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* nest destroyed by predator at the lake south of Bu Tesira recreational park, Benghazi, Cyrenaica, Libya, 30 April 2010 (J. Hering)

Nid du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* détruit par de prédateur dans le lac au sud du parc Bu Tesira, Benghazi, Cyrénaïque, Libye, 30 avril 2010 (J. Hering)





**Figure 6.** Breeding records and recent spring sightings of Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* in Libya; the numbers correlate with the site numbers in Table 1.

Données sur la nidification et observations printanières récentes du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* en Libye ; les chiffres correspondent aux numéros des sites du Tableau 1.

shore of the lake. Measurements were: diameter 25 × 25 cm, height 14.5 cm and cup 2.5 cm. The nest material consisted exclusively of pieces of *Phragmites* reeds. An adult was seen in flight in the vicinity of the nest. A further nest with remnants

of predated eggs (probably three) was found on 30 April, c.30 m to the south (Fig. 5). This nest was also constructed in the layer of bent reeds, c.1.2 m above water level, in a belt of very dense reeds c.8 m wide at this point. The nest was 18.5 cm



**Table 1.** Records of Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* in spring 2008 and 2010 in Libya.  
**Tableau 1.** Observations du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* aux printemps 2008 et 2010 en Libye.

No.	Date	Location	Number of birds and nests
1	26 May 2008	Lake in Bu Tesira recreational park, Cyrenaica	two males, four females; one probable nest
2	27 May 2008	Al Marj, Cyrenaica	two males
3	26 April 2010	Wadi Kaam, Tripolitania	four males, one female
4	26 April 2010	Wetland near Zlitan, Tripolitania	one male
5	27–28 April 2010	Various wetlands in Taurgha Oasis, Tripolitania	c.10 individuals
6	30 April 2010	Lake near sports club in southern Benghazi, Cyrenaica	two individuals
7	30 April–6 May 2010	Lake south of Bu Tesira recreational park, Cyrenaica	c.4–6 individuals; two nests
8	1–7 May 2010	<i>Phragmites</i> stands south of Benghazi, Cyrenaica	two individuals

in diameter and 18.0 cm high. On both days we observed 4–6 Little Bitterns along the east shore, which is c.200 m in length and fringed by reeds.

Little Bittern is probably a regular breeding bird in suitable habitat in Libya. In 2008 and 2010 we made a series of sightings during the species' North African breeding season that support this assumption (Table 1, Fig. 6). On 26 May 2009, we found an empty nest on the shore of Bu Tesira lake that probably was constructed by Little Bitterns (*cf.* Hering & Fuchs 2010). In addition to the locations listed in Table 1, potential breeding areas include the well-developed reedbeds of the western Benghazi lakes, as well as the wetlands near Al Oardah, Alt-Germa, Bergin, Hummayrah in Fezzan, Sabha sewage farm, the desert volcano Wau an Namus and the waste-water area south of Al Kufra Oasis (see Hering *et al.* 2009 for habitat details).

### Acknowledgements

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# First record of Greater Kestrel *Falco rupicoloides* for Niger and western Africa

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**Première mention de la Crécerelle aux yeux blancs *Falco rupicoloides* pour le Niger et l'Afrique de l'Ouest.** Des observations de rapaces ont été réalisées par le projet Antilopes Sahélo-Sahariennes dans la future aire protégée de Termit / Tin Toumma, Niger de l'est, depuis 2006. Le Faucon crécerelle *Falco tinnunculus* est le plus commun des petits faucons entre août et mars. La crécerellette *F. naumanni* et le Faucon kobez *F. vespertinus* ont également été recensés. Le 16 février 2009, une Crécerelle aux yeux blancs *F. rupicoloides* a été observée et photographiée pour la première fois en Afrique de l'Ouest. Cette espèce est principalement sédentaire, effectuant parfois quelques déplacements au niveau des zones les plus sèches au sein de son aire de répartition en Afrique orientale et méridionale. La question est de savoir si l'individu observé appartient à une population occidentale inconnue ou s'il s'agit d'une dispersion naturelle à partir de l'Afrique orientale.

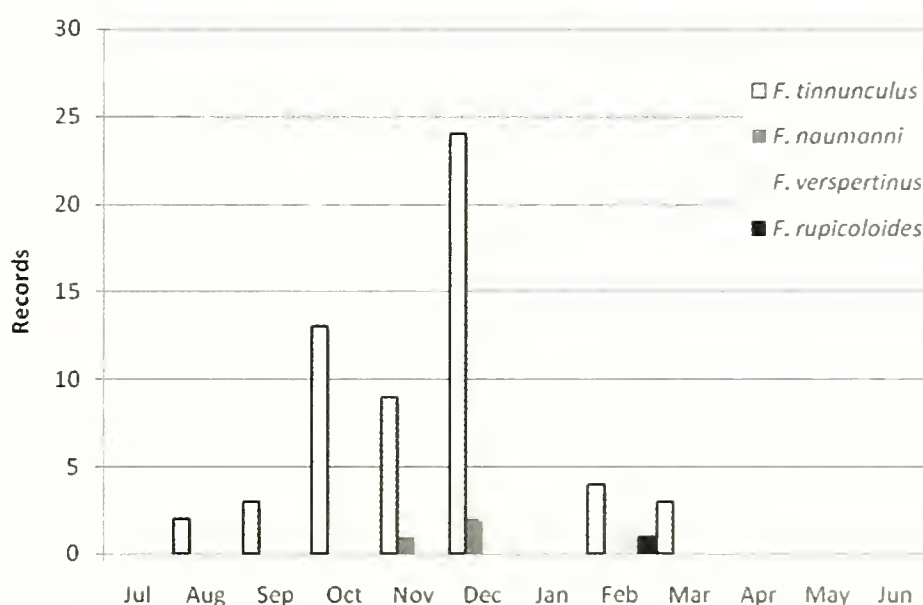
The Sahelo-Saharan Antelope project has been working in partnership with the Nigerien government since 2006 to establish a protected area centred around the Termit Massif in eastern Niger. The project team routinely records all birds of prey during monthly monitoring missions to the region.

The majority of small falcons recorded are Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*, which are seen most frequently in the fossil drainage valleys (dalias) that characterise the main route to Termit from the south. The substrate is sand desert, with *Acacia raddiana* and *Maerua crassifolia* trees scattered thinly but consistently across the landscape. Characteristic resident bird species include Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs*, Nubian Bustard *Neotis nuba*, Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridonalis* and Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex*. Common Kestrel observations in the area increase between August and March, peaking in December (Fig. 1). In contrast, Lesser Kestrels *F. naumanni* were seen on three occasions: one on 23 November 2008, two on 6 December 2008 and four on 10 December 2009, whilst two female / immature Red-footed Falcons *F. vespertinus* were observed at separate locations on 20 February 2004.

On 16 February 2009, at 10.00 hrs, TR photographed an unusual kestrel in the dalia of Achetnamou (15°14'25.2"N 10°44'37.5"E) while en route from Termit to Tesker (Figs. 2–3). Subsequent examination of the photographs revealed the clear yellow-white eyes, weakly streaked head and face, lack of a distinct moustachial stripe, and strongly black-barred grey tail with a narrow

white terminal band, all of which are distinctive features of Greater (or White-eyed) Kestrel *F. rupicoloides*.

Greater Kestrel has not previously been recorded anywhere in West Africa (Borrow & Demey 2001). The nearest records are from Ethiopia, on the banks of the Nile at the border between Ethiopia and Sudan (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001) and it seems probable that the species is present in adjacent southern Sudan. Greater Kestrel has a discontinuous distribution and elsewhere occurs in north-west Somalia, south through Kenya and Tanzania and more generally across arid habitats in southern Africa (Brown *et al.* 1982). Ethiopian birds, which, with those from Somalia, belong to the race *fieldi*, are paler in ground colour than the darker and more heavily



**Figure 1.** Frequency by month of four kestrel *Falco* species in eastern Niger, in 2006–10.

Fréquence par mois de quatre espèces de faucon *Falco* au Niger de l'est, en 2006–10.





**Figures 2–3.** Greater Kestrel / Crécerelle aux yeux blancs *Falco rupicoloides*, Termit, Niger, 16 February 2009 (Thomas Rabeil)

barred southern birds. The Termit bird appeared to have paler, lighter barring. This might indicate that it was from the closest part of the known range, but such coloration might also be expected in any bird living in arid and bright environments in which the bird was encountered.

Available data suggest that Greater Kestrel is sedentary or nomadic in different parts of its range (Brown *et al.* 1982). It is considered sedentary in parts of Somalia and the Kenya Rift Valley, for example, but may also appear irregularly in new areas to breed before moving on. In southern Africa it shows 'local nomadic movements' in response to rainfall and the species has also been described as an irruptive or local migrant, with juveniles dispersing from the breeding areas. Elsewhere it is described as nomadic given changeable local

conditions, with 'ringing recoveries indicating some movements of >300 km' (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001).

The bird at Termit was at least 2,500 km from the nearest known population. It appeared to be in good health. Although Niger is a favoured destination for falconers, Greater Kestrel is not known to be used in falconry and it therefore seems unlikely to be an escaped falconer's bird. The species' presence at Termit is surprising, whether the result of an extreme case of natural dispersal or representing a previously overlooked, local West African population. Given the relatively poor coverage of the region to date, either scenario is plausible.

### Acknowledgements

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# First records for Seychelles of Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*, Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* and the genus *Ficedula*

John and Viv Phillips

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**Premières mentions pour les Seychelles du Martinet à ventre blanc *Tachymarptis melba*, du Traquet du désert *Oenanthe deserti* et du genre *Ficedula*.** En 2009, un Martinet à ventre blanc *Tachymarptis melba* a été observé à Bird Island, Seychelles, le 20–21 novembre et un Traquet du désert *Oenanthe deserti* mâle immature le 16–18 novembre. Probablement le même mâle immature était à Cousine le 23–24 novembre. Ces observations ont été acceptées par le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois comme les premières données pour le pays. De plus, un gobemouche du genre *Ficedula* a été observé à Bird Island le 13 et 17 novembre. Il n'y a pas de données précédentes de ce genre pour les Seychelles.

**Summary.** In 2009, an Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* was present on Bird Island, Seychelles, on 20–21 November and an immature male Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* on 16–18 November. Probably the same individual of the latter was on Cousine on 23–24 November. These observations have been accepted by the Seychelles Bird Records Committee as the first records for the country. In addition, a flycatcher of the genus *Ficedula* was seen on Bird Island on 13 and 17 November. There have been no previous records of this genus in Seychelles.

**F**rom 9 to 21 November 2009 we stayed on Bird Island, the northernmost of the Seychelles (03°43'S 55°13'E), which has long been known as a significant locality in the archipelago for migrants (Feare 1979, Phillips & Phillips 2005). During this period we observed more than 20 species of Palearctic-breeding landbirds, a remarkable total for this remote oceanic island. Particularly noteworthy were Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* and Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, for which there are fewer than five accepted Seychelles records of each species.

## **Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba***

On the morning of 20 November, VP had brief views of a large swift with mostly white underparts, feeding high over the centre of Bird Island. It quickly disappeared from view, but we re-found the bird shortly afterwards and acquired prolonged views down to c.25 m, permitting its identification as an Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*. There are no other large swifts with mainly white underparts apart from the dark undertail-coverts and breast-band. The bird remained on

the island until the next day, when it was also seen by A. P. Skerrett. Once, on 21 November, we observed it being pursued by several Greater Frigate *Fregata minor* and Lesser Frigatebirds *F. ariel* at an altitude of c.50 m several hundred metres offshore. At one point a Greater Frigatebird succeeded in seizing the swift's wingtip in its bill for several seconds, before the swift managed to escape or the frigatebird tired of the chase and released it.

Alpine Swift has an extensive Old World range, breeding from southern Europe and North Africa to Turkestan, the western Himalayas (probably) and Sri Lanka, as well as in eastern and southern Africa, Madagascar, and in Mali (Chantler & Driessens 2000). Those breeding in the Western Palearctic are considered to probably winter across the northern Afrotropics, including northern Uganda, but there is no evidence of their wintering south of the equator (Chantler & Driessens 2000). All Afrotropical populations are to some extent dispersive and some are partially migratory (Chantler 1999, Chantler & Driessens 2000, Hockey *et al.* 2005, Ash & Atkins 2009). The fact that the Seychelles individual arrived at the same time as unusually large numbers of Palearctic migrants may also indicate that it originated in the Palearctic rather than Africa.



### Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

On 16 November JP discovered an immature male Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* in open scrub immediately adjacent to the coast. It remained until 18 November, feeding from low perches near the beach and permitting excellent views. Identification was straightforward, with the all-black tail in particular being diagnostic among white-rumped wheatears. The bird was also seen by R. Bresson.

On 23 November an immature male Desert Wheatear was found by K. Jolliffe on Cousine Island, Seychelles, c.85 km south-east of Bird Island. It remained until the next day and was mist-netted and ringed (Figs. 1–2). It appeared very similar to the Bird Island individual and SBRC accepted the record as ‘probably the same individual as on Bird Island’. From measurements taken in the hand and the large amount of white on the inner webs of the primaries (Fig. 2), the bird was considered to be *O. d. oreophila*, which subspecies breeds from the Pamirs and Himalayas through Xinjiang and Tibet east to Inner Mongolia (Cramp & Simmons 2004). Desert Wheatear is rare in East Africa at the latitude of Seychelles, with, for instance, just two records in Kenya (Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002).

### *Ficedula* flycatcher

On 13 November we obtained good views of a *Ficedula* flycatcher in an area of open grassland and sparse scrub; what was probably the same individual was observed by VP and R. Bresson on 17 November. It was in first-year plumage and it could not be identified to species; however, on balance the observers considered the bird more likely to have been a Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca* than either Semi-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata* or Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis*. This conclusion was based mainly on the following: (1) quite conspicuous white in the outer tail (Collared has less white); (2) upperparts lacking any grey tones, and appearing quite dark brown; (3) breast smudged buffish and not very clear white (Collared, at least, tends to appear ‘cleaner’); (4) no indication of any pale collar on hindneck; (5) no suggestion of any pale rump patch; (6) very narrow, vertical white line on the folded wing formed by the white bases to the primaries (broader and more conspicuous in Semi-collared and especially Collared); and (7) tiny white tips



**Figures 1–2.** Desert Wheatear / Traquet du désert *Oenanthe deserti oreophila*, Cousine Island, Seychelles, 23–24 November 2010 (K. Jolliffe)

to some median coverts, forming a broken line or series of dots near the wing bend (better marked in typical Collared and Semi-collared, tending to form a distinct upper wingbar). However there is a considerable overlap between the three species in respect of these features (Svensson 1992, Cramp & Simmons 2004, Svensson *et al.* 2009).

All of these three *Ficedula* species migrate from their Palearctic breeding areas to the Afrotropics. The precise distributions of Semi-collared and Collared Flycatchers in East Africa are uncertain, but either or both occur in Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Uganda and Tanzania (Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002, Taylor 2006). The non-breeding distribution of Pied Flycatcher lies further west and north (Dowsett 2010), and only one record (in Kenya) is mentioned by Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002). For this reason, Pied Flycatcher might appear the least likely of the three to occur in Seychelles. However, the collective breeding distribution of Collared and Semi-collared Flycatchers extends east only to c.50–55°E, whereas Pied breeds east to c.90°E



(Moreau 1972, Cramp & Simmons 2004). Although Pied Flycatchers en route to Africa from the eastern breeding range tend to migrate west before moving south, some individuals perhaps take a more direct route and could therefore reach Seychelles during north-west winds.

The observations of Desert Wheatear and Alpine Swift have been accepted by the Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) as the species' first records for Seychelles, and there have been no previous claims of either. The flycatcher record has been accepted by SBRC only to genus level; there have been no previous sightings of any *Ficedula* in Seychelles.

The period from October to December 2009 was clearly rather exceptional in terms of the number of Palearctic migrants in Seychelles (Demey 2010). It appears that an unusually early onset of the north-west monsoon winds may have caused migrants to 'drift' to Seychelles in larger numbers than usual. However, much remains to be learned concerning migration in this region. The ongoing steady rate of additions to the Seychelles bird list is equally reflective of the paucity of observers and lack of systematic recording until recently, as of the genuine novelty of such occurrences, and the year 2009 may yet prove to have been less unusual than it appears at present.

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Photospot:  
Iago Sparrows *Passer iagoensis* in the mirror

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**Moineaux du Cap-Vert *Passer iagoensis* dans le miroir.** Des photos documentent le comportement d'un couple de Moineaux du Cap-Vert *Passer iagoensis* à Santiago, îles du Cap-Vert, qui regardaient leurs propres réflexions dans des pare-brises et vitres de voitures.

Iago Sparrow *Passer iagoensis* is endemic to the Cape Verde archipelago, where it occurs on all of the islands and the majority of islets, although it is scarce on Fogo (cf. Geniez & López-Jurado 1998), if present at all (R. Barone pers. obs.). The species is found from marine cliffs to montane areas, being especially common in lowland xerophytic vegetation, gorges and cliffs, lava plains, cultivation, towns and villages, and is locally abundant in some forested areas (Summers-Smith 1988, Cramp & Perrins 1994,

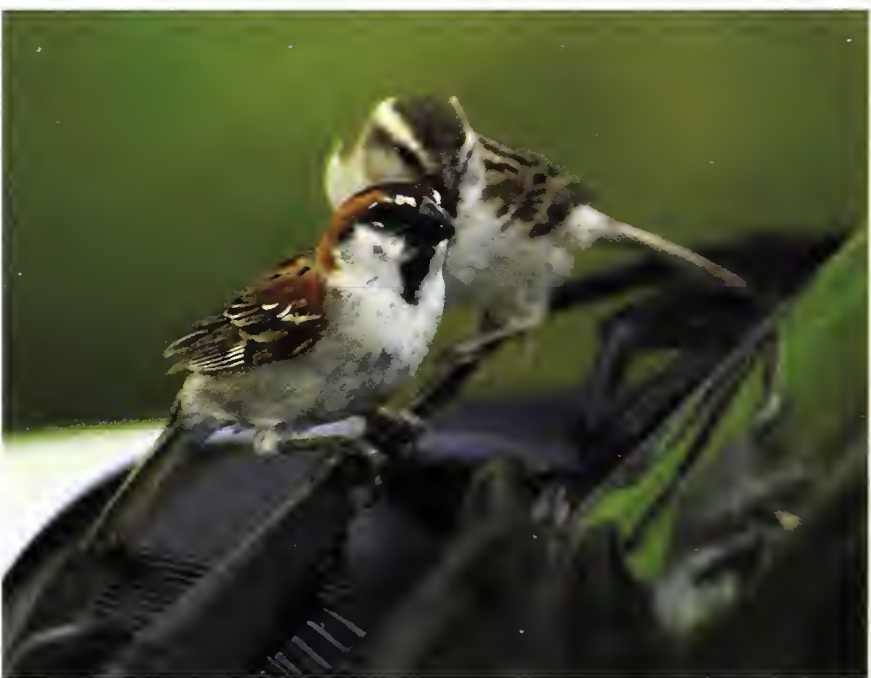
Hazevoet 1995, Barone & Delgado 1999, Barone 2005).

On 15 October 2009, while visiting the botanical garden at São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago, we were surprised by the behaviour of an adult pair of Iago Sparrows. After parking our car, both birds came directly to the vehicle and repeatedly observed their own reflections in different windows and windscreens (Figs. 1–3). On 21 October, we visited this locality again and observed the same behaviour for several minutes.



**Figures 1–3.** Adult male and female Iago Sparrows *Passer iagoensis* observing their reflections in the windscreens and windows of a car, São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands, October 2009 (R. Barone)

Moineaux du Cap-Vert *Passer iagoensis* mâle et femelle observant leurs réflexions dans le pare-brise et les vitres d'une voiture, São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago, îles du Cap-Vert, octobre 2009 (R. Barone)





Elsewhere on the island of Santiago, we did not observe similar behaviour, which seems to be rare and presumably induced by the high frequency of human visits to the botanical garden and the incidental reflection of the birds in windows and windscreens while feeding around parked cars. However, C. J. Hazevoet (*in litt.* 2010) frequently witnessed, in 1992–93, an Iago Sparrow observing its reflection in, and flying against, a house window at Mindelo, São Vicente. This behaviour is well known in several European small passerines and Corvidae (see Siverio & Felipe 2008), including the related House Sparrow *P. domesticus* (Radford 1966). It has recently been recorded in another insular species, Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus berthelotii* (Siverio & Felipe 2008). In some instances, this particular behaviour has been also associated to vehicles, involving, as in other similar cases, generally single individuals (see Siverio & Felipe 2008). Apart from simple reflection, window collision in birds is a widespread phenomenon and seems to be caused not only by territorial individuals fighting their mirror images, which frequently result in harmless collisions and explain perfectly our case, but by a variety of other quite different situations, as noted by Klem (1989).

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# Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from late 2010 and early 2011, with a few from earlier dates.** We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to the ABC country

checklists ([www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html)) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

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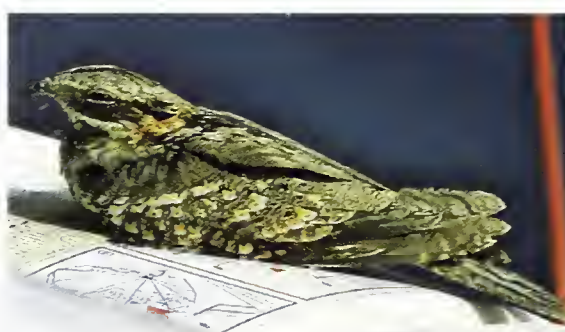
Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. **La plupart des données sont de fin 2010 et début 2011 ; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes.** Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs

données et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment les 'checklists' des pays africains du ABC ([www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html)) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

## Angola

### A Yellow-nosed Albatross

*Thalassarche chlororhynchos* was seen off Angola at 07°55'S 12°03'E on 21 April 2011 (Figs. 1–2). Other birds observed 90–130 km off the coast include a **Rufous-cheeked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus rufigena* on 21 April (Fig. 3), a **Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* that stayed on board for three days from 1 May, a **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* that stayed on board for



**Figure 3.** Rufous-cheeked Nightjar / Engoulevent à joues rousses *Caprimulgus rufigena*, off Angola, 21 April 2011 (Marijke de Boer)

at least two days from 19 April, a presumed **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* on 8 April and a **Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea* on 21 April (MdB).

## Azores

The following records are from December 2010–April 2011. A total of five **Pied-billed Grebes** *Podilymbus podiceps* was present on Flores, São Miguel and Terceira through February. A female / first-year **Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola* stayed at Paul da Praia and Cabrito reservoir, Terceira, from 17 December through mid March. The first **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* for the Azores and the Western Palearctic was a first-year photographed at Angra do Heroísmo,

Terceira, on 28 July 2010, but its true identity remained unappreciated until late January when it was still present; it stayed through April. Belated news concerned the second for the archipelago, another first-year individual, photographed at Lajes do Pico, Pico, on 18–28 October 2010. An **American Great Egret** *Egretta alba egretta* on Graciosa was still present in March. The long-staying **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* at Paul da Praia remained through mid March (it was first seen there on 15 February 2010); probably the same individual was observed at Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, from 20 April. An adult male **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* at Lagoa do Ginjal, Terceira, on 14 May, was the fifth for the Azores. An **American Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinica* was found moribund on 13 January. An **American Coot** *Fulica americana* stayed at Paul da Praia, Terceira, from 18 January through mid April. Seven **Killdeers** *Charadrius vociferus* were present: a pair on Santa Maria on 19–21 February (joined by a third individual on 20–21 February); a pair at Santa Cruz, Flores, on 24–25 February; and a pair at Ponta Delgada, Flores, on 24 February. The **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius*



**Figures 1–2.** Yellow-nosed Albatross / Albatros à bec jaune *Thalassarche chlororhynchos*, off Angola, 21 April 2011 (Xana Teixeira)



*hudsonicus* on São Miguel was seen again on 19 February; one stayed at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, from 5 to at least 15 May. A **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* stayed on Terceira from 31 January until at least 7 March and at Ponta Delgada harbour, São Miguel, on 6 February, sometimes together with a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes*. At Cabo da Praia, Terceira, a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* was seen from 27 April to 3 May. Also on Terceira, a **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* colour-ringed as a nestling in the Netherlands on 17 June 2010 was found in February, four **Bonaparte's Gulls** *L. philadelphia* were still present on 6 March, and a **White-winged Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* was seen in the same period. The **Belted Kingfisher** *Megasceryle halcyon* at Paul da Praia, Terceira, first reported on 16 September stayed until at least 19 December. A male **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* on Santa Maria on 19 May appears to be the first for the Azores (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 52–56, 135–142, 203–207).

## Benin

Records from the period November 2010 to May 2011 are as follows. At least 40–50 **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca* occurred at Ganvié on 22–23 November (JG). On a small pond surrounded by dense *Typha* beds in the suburbs of Cotonou, an adult **Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio porphyrio* feeding two large chicks was seen on 30 January; this appears to be the first certain record for the country as the species has been widely confused with Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrocyttus alleni* in the past. One or two **Little Grebes** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* and up to 1,200 **White-faced Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna viduata* were also present (BPo). A **Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* was photographed at Bouche du Roy, east of Grand Popo, on 12 November (JG). A pair of **Water Thick-knees** *Burhinus vermiculatus*, well seen in low vegetation behind the beach at Cotonou on 8 May (WP), with several other thick-knees, probably all of this species, calling



**Figure 4.** Indian House Crow / Corbeau familier *Corvus splendens*, Cotonou, Benin, 6 April 2011 (Bruno Portier)

at night during the same month, constitutes the first record for Benin. A calling **Forbes's Plover** *Charadrius forbesi* flew over Houndodji lagoon near Togbin, c.12 km west of Cotonou, on 28 November (BPo). An **American / Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva / dominica* was foraging with two Grey Plovers *P. squatarola* at Bouche du Roy on 12 November; it was first seen from a dugout, but unfortunately could not be found again when the observer went ashore. A pair of **Lesser Black-winged** (=Senegal) **Lapwings** *Vanellus lugubris* north of Ganvié on 22 November would be an addition to the Benin list (JG).

In the vicinity of Cotonou harbour, two adult **Red Knots** *Calidris canutus* were seen on 30 November; this appears to be the first country record. Subsequently, a first-winter was seen at the same site from 27 April to 5 May (BPo). In the same area, a **Little Stint** *C. alpina* was seen on 14 November (WP) and a **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* on 21–26 November (BPo, WP). A **Dunlin** *C. alpina* was at Bouche du Roy on 12 November; there are very few records from Benin (JG). **Great Snipes** *Gallinago media* were found in Pendjari National Park on 19 November (one; JG), Plaine du Sô on 10 January (one; BPo) and near Domè (c.07°03'N 002°19'E) on 17 April (two; BPo, WP, FD-L, RJD). An adult **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* photographed at Bouche du Roy on 12 November is a first for Benin (JG). At Cotonou, two immature **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *L. fuscus* were seen on 30

November and 1 December, with a second-calendar year there on 9 May. An **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* was in front of the Hotel du Lac, at Nokoué Lake, on 4 May, while on the same day an **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*, moulting from first-winter plumage, rested for a few hours on the beach west of the harbour. A late Arctic Tern, an adult in full breeding dress, flew west on 22 May (BPo). Four **Damara Terns** *S. balaenarum* were photographed at Bouche du Roy on 12 November (JG).

## A Thick-billed Cuckoo

*Pachycoccyx audeberti* was seen again in Gbadagba Game Ranch on 15 April (c.07°36'N 001°58'E) where it was found in April 2009 (BPo); the species was also heard in the Domè area (c.07°03'N 02°19'E) on 17 April (BPo, WP, FD-L, RJD). Four **Pallid Swifts** *Apus pallidus* with Little Swifts *A. affinis* and African Palm Swifts *Cypsiurus parvus* were claimed from Abomey on 13 November. At least 40 **Mottled Swifts** *Tachymarptis aequatorialis* were seen within a large group of c.700 **Alpine Swifts** *T. melba* above Bali pond, Pendjari National Park, on 17 November (JG). An adult female **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* was well seen on 18 May in the Forêt classée d'Atchirigbé (c.07°33'N 02°07'E; BPo); this is the southernmost record in the country. On 6 March, a male **Yellow-bellied Hyliota** *Hyliota flavigaster* was observed in a mixed-species flock south-west of Cobly (JM). **Marsh Tchagra** *Tchagra minuta*, for which there are only two previous records in Benin, was found at a few locations in the south and appears not uncommon in suitable habitat (BPo, WP). The ship-assisted **Indian House Crow** *Corvus splendens* found in the Cotonou harbour area in February 2010 was seen again on several occasions (BPo; Fig. 4). **Forest Chestnut-winged Starlings** *Onychognathus fulgidus* were noted at the southern localities of Ouidah, Pahou and Covè; there are few previous records for Benin (BPo, WP, FD-L, RJD). Four colonies of 4–6 pairs of **Slender-**



**billed Weavers** *Ploceus pelzelni* were found at Grand Popo on 10–13 November, with a female at Ganvié on 22nd (JG); this species appears far commoner than previously thought. A male **Black-bellied Seedcracker** *Pyrenestes ostrinus* was observed in a riparian forest near Domè on 13 April (BPo). **Anambra Waxbill** *Estrilda poliopareia*, discovered in Benin in August 2010, was found at some additional localities in the Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, even in Sô-Ava, <10 km from Cotonou (WP, BPo), and 10–20 were seen at Ganvié on 22–23 November (JG).

A four-day visit to Monts Kouffé and Tobé forest, respectively north and south-west of Banté, in mid-April 2011 produced many species of interest, including **Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (one failing to catch a Rock Hyrax *Procapra ruficeps* on Tobé rock), **White-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura pulchra* (Tobé; current northern limit), **Spotted Thick-knee** *Burhinus capensis* (Tobé; current southern limit), **Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster* (both sites; current northern limit), **Verreaux's Eagle Owl** *Bubo lacteus* (Kouffé), **Narina's Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* (Kouffé), **Piping Hornbill** *Bycanistes fistulator* (common at both sites), **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni* (common in transition woodland at Tobé), **Grey-headed Bristlebill** *Bleda canicapillus* (both sites; current northern limit), **Forest Robin** *Stiphrornis erythrothorax* (Tobé; northern limit), **Green Crombec** *Sylvietta virens*, **Rock-loving Cisticola** *Cisticola aberrans* (Tobé rock), **Rufous Cisticola** *C. rufus* (common at Kouffé; current southern limit), and **Puvel's Illadopsis** *Illadopsis puveli* (Tobé; current northern limit).

On the coast, exploration of Pahou, the last remnant of coastal forest, on 10 April produced several **Sabine's Puffbacks** *Dryoscopus sabini* (previously known only from Niaouli) together with **Leaflove** *Pyrrhurus scandens* and **Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii* (the latter two absent from Niaouli-Lama, to reappear further north).

At Grand-Popo a **Buff-spotted Woodpecker** *Campethera nivosus* was seen in a thicket, and at least two male **Wilson's Indigobirds** *Vidua wilsoni* were in full breeding dress and singing, feeding with their host **Bar-breasted Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rufopicta*, on 28–29 April. A female or immature **Cuckoo Finch** *Anomalospiza imberbis* near Domè on 17 April is only the second record for the country. Both **Ahanta Francolin** *Francolinus achantensis* and **Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster* were found to be common in thicket along the lower Mono River on the Togo border. On 11–26 April, a **Western Bronze-naped Pigeon** *Columba iriditorques* was singing at Niaouli, with a few also in Lama forest.

Migrants observed in April include the following. Flocks of **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus* were near Dan and Tobé on 11–15 April, including c.100 hunting termites at dusk around Tobé rock on 14th. Several **Common Cuckoos** *Cuculus canorus* were seen between 13 and 26 April, from Kouffé to the Lama. At least six **African Black Swifts** *Apus barbatus*, a new species for Benin, flew over Tobé rock, calling, on 15 April. **Mottled Swifts** passed north to north-west in large numbers from the 12th (Kouffé) to the 19th (Niaouli), often in flocks of c.50. There was sustained passage of **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* until 19 April over Niaouli, with up to thousands daily over Kouffé and Tobé mid month. The last **Rosy Bee-eaters** *M. malimbicus* (two) flew east over Niaouli on 10 April. **White-throated Bee-eaters** *M. albicollis* started passing north over Kouffé and Tobé on 13 and 16 April. Exceptional numbers of **Wood Warblers** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* were grounded in woodland and dry forest at Kouffé and Tobé on 13–16 April (FD-L, RJD).

## Botswana

In January–May 2011 the following were reported. Almost 200 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were at Lake Ngami on 6 March, with 1,000 **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* and 50+ **Pink-**

**backed Pelicans** *P. rufescens* also there (KO, TT, ST). A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was reported in Maun in January (GA, GS). Single **Denham's Bustards** *Neotis denhami* were seen at Orapa Game Park in mid January (PC) and at Pandamatenga Farm on 21 January (DHa). A **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* was reported at a pool c.10 km south of Sepupa on the western side of the Panhandle in mid January (per TH), whilst a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was observed in Chobe National Park in March (MK). A **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* was claimed from Lake Ngami on 29 May (per TH). Also of note was an immature **Klaas's Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx klaas* near Tshabong on 28 March (CB).

An influx of **Dusky Larks** *Pinarocorys nigricans* occurred in south and south-east Botswana in February–March, when many small groups were reported, with one as far south-west as Tshabong on 28 March (CB). A **Heuglin's Robin** *Cossypha heuglini* was ringed in Francistown on 26 March (one had also been caught there in April 2010) and two were trapped at the same site on 1 May; a pair was also reported in a garden c.1 km distant—these records represent a westward range extension in eastern Botswana (NBo). A group of **Burnt-necked Eremomelas** *Eremomela usticollis* was discovered near Kang on 21 May; the Kalahari is outside the expected range of this species (CB).

## Burkina Faso

In February 2011, two new species for the country were photographed: an adult **Ovampo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis* at Karfiguela, in the south-west, on 18th and, rather surprisingly, a **Green Turaco** *Tauraco persa* in the Urban Park Bangré Wéogo (=Ouagadougou's Forest Reserve) on 21st. Other noteworthy records included six **African Pygmy Geese** *Nettapus auritus*, a **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* and a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* at Karfiguela on 19th, with another Lesser Jacana at Lake Tengrela on 18th, and **Neumann's Starlings**



*Onychognathus neumanni* at Pics du Sindou on 18th and Karfiguela the next day (CG per BPo).

## Burundi

Records from a short visit in February 2011, accompanied by Geoffroy Citegetse, include the following. In the Rusizi Delta, close to Bujumbura, a **Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus* seen on 5th was a surprise as the species is listed as a vagrant to the country; it has apparently been present since October 2010 at least. The delta held many waterbirds, such as **African Openbills** *Anastomus lemeligerus* (many), **White-faced Dendrocygna** *viduata* and **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** *D. bicolor* (hundreds), **Knob-billed Ducks** *Sarkidiornis melanotos*, **Spur-winged Geese** *Plectropterus gambensis*, **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* (30+), and a few waders, including several **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola*. Kibira forest, a huge Afro-montane forest that extends further north into Rwanda (Nyungwe), was visited on 6th and yielded a fair number of Albertine Rift endemics, including **Red-faced Woodland Warbler** *Phylloscopus laetus*, **Mountain Masked Apalis** *Apalis personata*, **Rwenzori Apalis** *A. ruwenzorii*, **Rwenzori Batis** *Batis diops*, **Blue-headed Sunbird** *Cyanomitra alinae*, **Regal Sunbird** *Cinnyris regia*, **Rwenzori Double-collared Sunbird** *C. stuhlmanni*, **Mountain Sooty Boubou** *Laniarius poensis*, **Strange Weaver** *Ploceus alienus* and **Dusky Crimsonwing** *Cryptospiza jacksoni*. The country's political situation now appears generally stable, its infrastructure is improving, and travel is cheaper than in other countries in the region (BP).

## Cameroon

A **Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* was seen in Waza National Park (=NP) on 11 March 2011; what was apparently the first for the country was recorded on 11 April 2006. A male **Savile's Bustard** *Lophotis savilei* was flushed in the Waza area on 10 March. Three **African / Green-breasted Pittas**

*Pitta angolensis* / *P. reichenowi* were displaying in Korup NP on 29 March; the birds uttered the deeper, flatter sound of Green-breasted Pitta and responded to tape-recordings of that taxon, but lacked the deep green breast and pure white throat found in extreme examples of *reichenowi*, thus appearing more like *P. angolensis*. These Cameroonian birds may in fact be hybrids. **Forest Robins** *Stiphornis erythrothorax* observed in Korup had the olive upperparts of nominate *erythrothorax* rather than the sooty-grey of subspecies *gabonensis*, the race supposedly occurring there. A **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* was seen in Bénoué NP on 14 March; apart from a sighting in 2010 at this site, there do not appear to be any previous records for the park (NB).

## Canary Islands

Records from December 2010–April 2011 include the following. Three **Swinhoe's Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma monorhis* were seen as close as 150 m offshore from Arrecife, Lanzarote, on 18 December. **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* were observed at Playa del Pozo Negro, Fuerteventura, on 20 December (one) and Tallarte, Teide, Gran Canaria, on 9 March (two). An adult **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* was at Tinajo, Las Palmas, on 29 January. A pair of **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* with five young photographed at Janubio salt pans on 15 April, constitutes the first breeding record for Lanzarote. Rare ducks photographed on Fuerteventura on 4 February include a **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* at Rosa Catalina García and a **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* at Caleta de Fuste. Single **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* were seen at Tejina ponds, Tenerife, on 6 March and at Tías golf course, Lanzarote, on 15 April. An **African Crane** *Crex egregia* landed on a boat off Santa Cruz, Tenerife, on 5 January, but died after it was taken into care. If accepted, a **Spotted Sandgrouse** *Pterocles senegallus* seen and heard in a flock of Black-bellied Sandgrouse *P. orientalis* on Fuerteventura on

20 April will be the first for the archipelago. The first **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* for the Canary Islands was photographed on Lanzarote on 9–10 April. Also on Lanzarote, the **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzovorus* first seen on 21 October was still present on 25 December (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 52–60, 138, 207–211 and www.surfbirds.com).

## Cape Verde Islands

A **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* photographed off Santiago on 3 May 2011 was the second for the Cape Verdes; the first was in February 1999 (Fig. 5). A **Western Reef Egret** *Egretta gularis* was photographed on a beach near Porto Formosa, Santiago, on 1 May. The third **Black Heron** *E. ardesiaca* for the Cape Verdes was photographed at Ribeira da Vinha, São Vicente, in February 2010. Rare herons at Barragem de Poilão, Santiago, from 21 March into May 2011 included two **Black Herons**, up to three **Intermediate Egrets** *E. intermedia* and a **Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala*; the latter has probably been present since March 2009 (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 52, 203 and www.surfbirds.com).



**Figure 5.** White-tailed Tropicbird / Phaéton à bec jaune *Phaethon lepturus*, Cape Verde Islands, 3 May 2011 (John Brodie-Good)

## Chad

In August 2010, following good rains, a survey of the Manga and Eguey regions north of Massakory in west-central Chad recorded more than 141 **Rüppell's Vultures** *Gyps rueppellii*, 17+ **White-backed Vultures** *G. africanus*, 33 **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotus* and 29 **Hooded Vultures** *Necrosyrtes monachus*. In the Bahr al Ghazal sectors more than 2,000 **Abdim's**



**Storks** *Ciconia abdimii* and 150 **Marabou Storks** *Leptoptilos crumeniferus*, but only one **Black Crowned Crane** *Balearica pavonina* were observed over two days. Raptor sightings in this sector included 2,800+ **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* (including yellow- and dark-billed birds), three **Brown Snake Eagles** *Circaetus cinereus*, several **Gabar Goshawks** *Micronisus gabar* (mostly dark morphs), 288 **Grasshopper Buzzards** *Butastur rufipennis* (the majority immatures), 12 **Red-necked Buzzards** *Buteo auguralis*, two **Tawny Eagles** *Aquila rapax*, one **African Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus spilogaster*, two **Fox Kestrels** *Falco alopex*, one **Red-necked Falcon** *F. chicquera* and nine **Lanner Falcons** *F. biarmicus*. In the Manga a **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*, possibly a first record for Chad, was seen killing a **Nubian Bustard** *Neotis nuba* on the wing. **Golden Nightjars** *Caprimulgus eximius* were encountered six times, including a pair roosting under a grass tussock, adults with recently fledged young and a flushed bird instantly (but unsuccessfully) attacked by a Lanner Falcon. **Plain Nightjars** *C. inornatus* (at least three together, including grey and cinnamon morphs) were encountered once, and **Long-tailed Nightjars** *C. climacurus* were found in the more southerly grasslands.

Four **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* were at temporary desert pools north of 16°05'N with small groups of waders including **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*, **Wood Sandpipers** *Tringa glareola* and **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus*. An immature **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*, **Subalpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans* and an **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* were seen battling stiff winds in the same area. **Black-crowned Sparrow Larks** *Eremopterix nigriceps* were abundant in northern areas and overlapped with **Chestnut-backed Sparrow Larks** *E. leucotis* over a wide zone around 14°N. **Heuglin's Wheatears** *Oenanthe heuglini* were frequent in the grasslands between Lake Chad and the Manga. At the small desert settlement of Salal, in the upper Bahr

Al Ghazal, **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus*, first noted here in 2001, were again seen in the company of **Desert Sparrows** *P. simplex*.

In January–February 2011 a survey route from N'Djamena to the Reserve de Faune de l'Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim (RFOROA) in central Chad recorded **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* and **Marabou Storks** at a known nesting site atop the vertical-sided inselberg of Abu Tuyoor, west of Mongo. Several **Short-toed Snake Eagles** *Circaetus gallicus*, **Bateleurs** *Terathopius ecaudatus* and **Fox Kestrels** were also encountered at this latitude. **Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*, **Common Teal** *A. crecca*, **Garganey** *A. querquedula* and **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* were present on seasonal pools at the extreme south of the Bahr Al Ghazal. In the RFOROA, active nests of **Rüppell's Vultures** (four) and **Lappet-faced Vultures** (two) were observed. Also there were flocks of **African Swallow-tailed Kites** *Chelictinia riocourii* (frequent), **Pallid Harriers** *Circus macrourus* (frequent), **Common Kestrels** *Falco tinnunculus*, several groups of **Lesser Kestrels** *F. naumanni*, several **Lanner Falcons** and a single **Peregrine Falcon** *F. peregrinus*. A pair of **Common** (=Kurrichane) **Buttonquails** *Turnix sylvaticus* was also noted, whilst **Common Quails** *Coturnix coturnix* were frequent. A **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* and a **Pharaoh Eagle Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus* were photographed in the reserve. A rhythmic and sustained *k-tok, k-tok, k-tok* call (precise, measured and mechanical, resembling a small distant water pump) coming from bare ground beside the Ouadi Kharma shortly after sunset proved to be uttered by a **Golden Nightjar**. A poor photograph was taken, and the large white primary patch and white tail corners were seen in flight. This species is sometimes thought to be a 'churring' nightjar, although the call has also once been transcribed as 'koro'. In the grasslands, flocks of **Greater Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* were abundant, whilst displaying **Dunn's**

**Larks** *Eremalauda dunni* were occasionally seen.

Species observed in the woodlands and scrub of the ouadis Achim and Kharma included **Clapperton's Francolin** *Francolinus clappertoni*, **Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris*, **European Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, **Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* (whether Eastern / Western is unknown), **Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia hortensis* (Eastern / Western not distinguished) and **Rüppell's Warbler** *S. rueppellii*. **Masked Shrike** *Lanius nubicus* was found in large *Acacia* trees at Arada; other small migrants included **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica*, **Northern Wheatear** *O. oenanthe*, **Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* and **Lesser Whitethroat** *S. curruca*. A small group of **Kordofan Rufous Sparrows** *Passer cordofanicus* was observed west of Abéché, while **House Sparrows** (with very white cheeks) were present in all of the towns along the eastern boundary of the RFOROA, including Biltine and Arada, with the most north-easterly at Kalla Id, just south-west of 16°N 21°E. A single **Green-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia melba* found at a cattle watering point east of N'Djamena suggests that the frequently seen male paradise whydahs in breeding plumage in the area might be **Sahel Paradise Whydahs** *Vidua orientalis* (TW, JN).

## Egypt

In December 2010–April 2011 the following were reported. A **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* was at Sharm El Sheikh ponds on 5 April, along with a flock of 20 **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse** *Pterocles lichtensteinii* (AA, BB). **Three-banded Plovers** *Charadrius tricollaris* were again breeding at Tut Amon, Aswan, on 23 March when two adults and two juveniles were seen; the first record was in 1993 and the first breeding was in April 2009 (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 203). An adult **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* photographed at Crocodile Island, Luxor, on 12 March was the second-ever Nearctic vagrant for Egypt (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 138–142).



A **Bruce's Green Pigeon** *Treron waalia* photographed along the Nile at Luxor, Upper Egypt, on 3 January was the first for the Western Palearctic (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 56). More than 60 **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* were at the Daraw Camel Market near Kom Ombo on 8 April (AA, BB). A displaying pair of **African Mourning Doves** *Streptopelia decipiens* photographed at Abu Simbel on 29 December was the first record for Egypt, and the birds were seen again between at least 21 March and 8 May (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 56, 207; AA, BB). Four **African Collared Doves** *S. roseogrisea* were observed at Abu Simbel on 9 April, with a further six at Wadi Gamal National Park on 12 April (AA, BB). A **Black Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* was photographed at the Fantazia Resort, Marsa al Alam, on 5–12 December (AB). A single **Streaked Weaver** *Ploceus manyar* was found at Abassa on 14 April (AA, BB).

## Ethiopia

Records from December 2010–May 2011 include the following. Four **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* were seen at Lake Chelekcheka on 1 February (DH) and five at a reservoir north of Addis Ababa on 22nd (RS). A female **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* was photographed at Lake Zwai on 1 February (DH) and an **African Crake** *Crex egregia* at Lake Langano on 28 December (ASm). At the latter site a **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* was seen 20 February (RS). At Lake Abiata, a **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*, two **Greater Sand**

**Plovers** *C. leschenaultii*, a **Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* and two **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were observed on 11 February (DH). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was at Lake Zwai on 28 December (ASm); probably the same bird was seen again by several observers in February (OI, DH, RS; Fig. 6), with a second individual at Lake Langano on 20 February (RS). What appears to be the first **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* for Ethiopia was photographed at Lake Awassa on 10 May (DF). A *Heteromira* lark tentatively identified as **Sidamo / Archer's Lark** *H. sidamoensis / archeri* was photographed east of Jijiga on the road to Somaliland on 21 January (DH).



**Figure 7.** Leucistic Common Bulbul / Bulbul des jardins *Pycnonotus barbatus* with normal-plumaged individual, near Libreville, Gabon, October–December 2010 (Guy-Philippe Sounguet)

## Gabon

A leucistic **Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* was regularly seen north-east of Libreville in October–December 2010; it was always accompanied by a bird with a normal plumage (G-PS; Fig. 7).

## The Gambia

The first **Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* for the country was a male in a ricefield near Sapu, Lower River Division, on 22 January 2010. Other records from January 2010 include a (territorial?) pair of **Ovambo Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter ovampensis* near Marakissa and a **Red-necked Buzzard** *Buteo auguralis* near Feraba Banta, Western Division, on 26th, a first-winter male **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* at Tanji Bird Reserve on 27th, and three **Roseate Terns** *Sterna dougallii* at Bijol Island on 16th (AdB, SE, MvdO, NV). Four

**White-bellied Bustards** *Eupodotis senegalensis* were observed at Ngeyen Sanjal, North Bank Division, on 10 January 2011 (SD).

## Ghana

In December 2010–May 2011 the following were reported. A **Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* was at Sakumo lagoon, Tema, on 19 February (EK, AR). In the Shai Hills, a **Brown Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* was seen on 21 April and a **Wahlberg's Eagle** *Aquila wahlbergi* on 11 April; there are few records of either species in the country. A group of five **White-breasted Guinea fowl** *Agelastes meleagrides* was encountered at Ankasa National Park (=NP) on 15 April (NB). **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* were found at Keta lagoon on 18 February (six) and at Sakumono lagoon the next day (three) (EK, AR). A **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* was seen at Muni lagoon on 14 March (AM). An adult **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* in full breeding plumage, with a slight pink flush to the breast, was discovered at Sakumono lagoon on 8 May (DF). A **Little Gull** *L. minutus* was at Keta lagoon on 18 February (EK, AR). A female **Western Bronze-naped Pigeon** *Columba iriditorques* at Antwikwaa on 13 April is an unusual record for this locality. A male **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* was seen at Aboabo on 7 May (NB). In December, a **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was observed at Kalakpa, and **African Piculets** *Sasia africana* at Aboabo and Bobiri (GV). A **Sandy Scops Owl** *Otus icterorhynchus* was heard in early May. In Ankasa NP, a **Lowland Akalat** *Sheppardia cyornithopsis* was observed at an ant swarm on 15 April; previously the species was known only from Atewa and Tano Offin. **Ashy Flycatchers** *Muscicapa caerulea* were found in Ankasa NP, Kakum NP, and Atewa and Bobiri Forests in April–May; this species appears to have been under-recorded in Ghana. **Tessmann's Flycatchers** *Muscicapa tessmanni* were seen at Bonkro and in Bobiri Forest (NB). A **Lagden's Bushshrike**



**Figure 6.** Pectoral Sandpiper / Bécasseau à poitrine cendrée *Calidris melanotos*, Lake Zwai, Ethiopia, 20 February 2011 (David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours)



*Malaconotus lagdeni* was noted at Pra Sushin Forest on 11 May (DF).

## Kenya

The following reports are from December 2010–May 2011. At least 2,000 **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* roosted at Kipini, Tana River Delta, in April. A **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* was present at Kisumu sewage ponds on 24 December. A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* flew over the desert north of Marsabit on 7 March, which is an unusual location for this species. A pair of **African Swallow-tailed Kites** *Chelictinia riocourii* had a nest containing eggs at Sosian, Laikipia, on 4 April; there have been few breeding records in recent years. A male and a female **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* were seen together at Ngulia Safari Lodge, Tsavo West National Park (=NP), on 9 December, whilst a male flew over Mountain Lodge, Mount Kenya, on 13 April. This rare migrant seems to have been reported more frequently over the past 10–15 years but the Ngulia record probably constitutes the first record of two together in East Africa. An immature **Levant Sparrowhawk** *A. brevipes* was photographed at Lake Nakuru NP on 21 February; there have been several records over the past two years. At the same site, a **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* was seen on 14 December, whilst a subadult **Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* was feeding on a carcass on 21 February. An adult **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *A. pomarina* near Oloololo Gate, Masai Mara, on 26 April is a late date for this uncommon species. An immature **Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* was observed in the Gwasssi Hills, south Nyanza, on 19 January; the species had not been reported from this area previously. An estimated 10,000 **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* were feeding on termites after rain at Onkolde, Tana River Delta, on 7 April.

An immature **Madagascar Pratincole** *Glareola ocularis* ringed at Mida Creek on 28 March is an early date for this species; c.2,000 were near Moa, Tana River Delta, on 10

April—the delta clearly is a key site for this and many other waterbirds, but is seriously threatened (see *Bull. ABC* 16: 15 & 161). A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was at Loyengalani, Lake Turkana, on 9 March; this species is rare on the coast and even more so inland. A **Heuglin's Gull** *Larus heuglini* at Lake Oloidien, Naivasha, on 19 April is an uncommon record for this mostly coastal taxon which is now generally considered a race of Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*. A **Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons* in breeding plumage was observed at Loyengalani, Lake Turkana, on 9 March; with only a handful of records to date, further records from elsewhere in eastern Africa suggest the species is commoner than previously thought and that so-called Saunders's Terns *S. saundersi* should be examined more closely (see also Uganda). A **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* at Lake Baringo on 18 March is the fifth record for Kenya, the last being in February 1983. About 3,000 **Brown Noddies** *Anous stolidus* came to roost on Whale Island, Watamu, from mid May.

A **Bruce's Green Pigeon** *Treron waalia* was reported from the Kapenguria escarpment in late February; there have been unsubstantiated reports from the area of this species, which is otherwise restricted to Kenya's northern border. At least four **Purple-crested Turacos** *Tauraco porphyreolophus* were seen at Sultan Hamud Hills on 25 January; this is a new location for the species in an area where its habitat is fast disappearing. Five **Sabine's Spinetails** *Rhaphidura sabini* were observed in Kakamega on 22 December. This is a very rare bird in Kakamega to the extent it was thought extirpated—there has been no breeding record for 40 years, a handful of sight records in the 1970s, none in the 1980s and the last record was of two birds in June 1992. In the Masai Mara, a **Northern Carmine Bee-eater** *Merops nubicus* was reported on 17 December; this is possibly the first record for the park. A **Lilac-throated Roller** *Coracias caudata* of the rare north-eastern race *lorti* was well out of range in Timau on 5 March. A lone **Hemprich's**

**Hornbill** *Tockus hemprichii* was at Lake Nakuru NP on 14 December; this species is rarely recorded south of the equator.

**Williams's Lark** *Mirafra williamsi* was found north of Laisamis, Marsabit road, on 6 March—a new location for this Kenyan endemic. About 35 **Masked Larks** *Spizocorys personata* occurred at an unexpectedly high altitude and in unusual habitat in the Huri Hills on 8 March. A **Bush Pipit** *Anthus caffer* at Sosian, Laikipia, on 24 January represents a significant northward range extension. Four or five **Grey-olive Greenbuls** *Phyllastrephus cerviniventris* were seen in the Sultan Hamud Hills on 25 January; this species is uncommon inland and this site is >100 km from any previous record. A **Familiar Chat** *Cercomela familiaris* found on the South Nandi escarpment on 20 January represents another range extension of c.100 km. A **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* of the race *vittata* was identified on Solio Ranch on 7 February; this form is rare East Africa. A record of an **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* at Kapenguria escarpment on 13 March is the first for this area of this rare migrant. A pair of **Green-capped Eremomelas** *Eremomela scotops* was photographed on South Nandi escarpment on 20 January, constituting a northward range extension. More than 20 **Black-backed Cisticolas** *Cisticola eximius* were counted along the road between Oloololo Gate and Mara Bridge on 26 April; a few years ago this species was thought to be extinct in Kenya, but was then rediscovered in Ruma NP and subsequently appeared in the Mara, and is apparently spreading. A pair of **Trilling Cisticolas** *C. woosnami* was tape-recorded on the South Nandi escarpment on 20 January—a significant northward range extension. A record of a **Grey Apalis** *Apalis cinerea* in the Gwasssi Hills, south Nyanza, on 19 January constituted an extension to the south-west. The first **Semi-collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula semitorquata* east of Nairobi were recorded in Shimba Hills NP on 3 April and in Tsavo East NP on 7 April. **Northern**



**Double-collared Sunbird** *Cinnyris reichenowi* (= *preussi*) proved common in the Gwasssi Hills, south Nyanza, on 19 January—a new locality c. 100 km west of previously known sites.

About 15 **Violet-breasted Sunbirds** *C. pembae* attracted to a flowering *Combretum* at Sabaki on 5 April is an interesting record as the species is rare south of the Tana Delta. Four **Black-billed Weavers** *Ploceus melanogaster* in the Gwasssi Hills, south Nyanza, on 19 January represents a south-west range extension of >200 km. A **Bar-breasted Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rufopicta* was near Keringet, Kapenguria, on 14 March, a northward range extension of c. 100 km; first reported in Kenya in 1969, the species is known only from near Lake Victoria (CJ).

## Liberia

In January–March 2011 the following were reported. An **Ethiopian Swallow** *Hirundo aethiopica* at Putu camp, north of Sapo National Park, on 17 February constitutes an addition to the country list (KD, AMa). **Chattering Cisticola** *Cisticola anonymus*, found in a clearing within Gola Forest, near the border with Sierra Leone, on 20 March is another first for Liberia (RD).

Also in Gola Forest, a flock of c. 10 **Black-collared Lovebirds** *Agapornis swindernianus* was seen on 3 March, a **Brown Nightjar** *Veles binotatus* was singing on 21–22 March, and a silent **Yellow-footed Honeyguide** *Melignomon eisentrauti* was observed at forest edge on 19 March, whilst another was heard on 20th (RD).

**Preuss's Cliff Swallow** *Petrochelidon preussi* was found breeding again under the Du River bridge linking Roberts International Airport to the Firestone Plantation: 80–100 were present on 17 April and >120 on 25 April, including several recently fledged juveniles. This species is spreading west and south and was first found at this site in February 2005 (cf. *Bull. ABC* 12: 185). A flock was also observed further west along the coast, at the bridge at the border crossing to Sierra Leone, in March (RD). In Monrovia, a male **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* was seen

on 8 February (AMa), with another on 20 April (BP); there are only two previous records from 20 years ago, plus a recent report from Cape Mount.

An ornithological survey of the Putu Range, adjacent to Sapo National Park in south-east Liberia, in January–February 2011, produced 13 species of global conservation concern, among them **White-breasted Guineafowl** *Agelastes meleagrides*, **Black-headed Rufous Warbler** *Bathmocercus cerviniventris*, **Nimba Flycatcher** *Melaenornis annamarulae* (previously known only from four other locations in Liberia) and **Gola Malimbe** *Malimbus ballmanni* (seen in three mixed-species flocks). The three large hornbill species of the forest zone, **Brown-cheeked** *Bycanistes cylindricus*, **Black-casqued** *Ceratogymna atrata* and **Yellow-casqued Hornbill** *C. elata*, were still remarkably common, with the globally Near Threatened Yellow-casqued even being abundant. Four **Yellow-footed Honeyguides** were encountered; there are very few records in Liberia and these are the first for the south-east.

Range extensions or new localities were noted for 57 species, including the following. A male **Red-chested Flufftail** *Sarothrura rufa* and a duetting pair were heard at a small swamp; this species is rarely recorded in West Africa and Gatter (1997. *Birds of Liberia*) mentions only two

records, from north-west Liberia. A **Brown Nightjar** was singing at dawn and dusk on 22 January. Up to four **Bates's Swifts** *Apus batesi* were seen on Mount Jideh; in Liberia, this species was previously known only from the Nimba area and over forests at higher altitudes in northern Lofa County. A **Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksii* was observed once, whilst single **African Piculets** *Sasia africana* were encountered at three widely scattered locations; for the latter species, only two previous records are mentioned for Liberia. A pair of **Plain-backed Pipits** *Anthus leucophrys* foraged on a football field at Geeblo village on 29 January; this species penetrates the forest zone through large clearings. **Blue-shouldered Robin Chat** *Cossypha cyanocampter* was found at three locations in farmbrush at forest edge, whilst singing **Grey-throated Flycatchers** *Myioparus griseigularis* were regularly recorded throughout the forest. **Lead-coloured Flycatchers** *M. plumbeus* were observed at three locations; curiously, the only records mentioned by Gatter (1997) are of two collected in 1891 near Monrovia, but recently the species was recorded in North Lorma and Gola National Forests, and in the Nimba area (RD).

## Madeira

The first **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* for



**Figure 8.** Yellow-crowned Night Heron / Bihoreau violacé *Nyctanassa violacea*, Madeira, May 2011 (Mike Buckland)



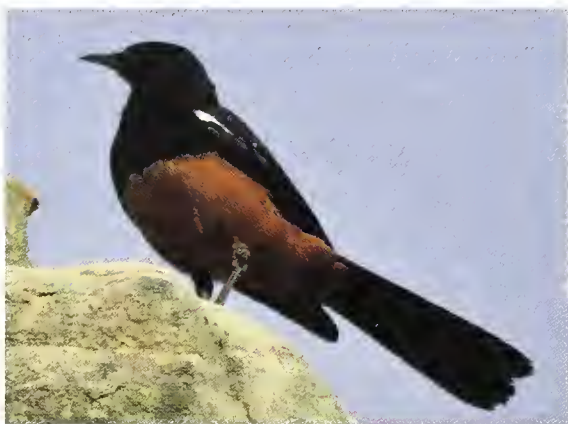
**Figure 9.** Zino's Petrel / Pétrel de Madère *Pterodroma madeira*, at sea off Madeira, May 2011 (Mike Buckland)



Madeira was an immature discovered at Funchal in early February 2011 which remained until late May at least (Fig. 8; per *Dutch Birding* 33: 203; GE, MB). **Zino's Petrels** *Pterodroma madeira* were photographed at sea on 18–19 May (MB; Fig. 9).

## Mali

**Mocking Cliff Chat** *Myrmecocichla cinnamomeiventris* was found on rocky outcrops at the village of Missirikoro, near Sikasso, in April and June 2011 (LS per MC; Figs. 10–11). This is a new locality for this patchily distributed species.



**Figures 10–11.** Mocking Cliff Chat *Myrmecocichla cinnamomeiventris*, male (top) and female, near Sikasso, Mali, 24 April 2011 (Lionel Sineux)

Traquet à ventre roux *Myrmecocichla cinnamomeiventris*, mâle (en haut) et femelle, près de Sikasso, Mali, 24 avril 2011 (Lionel Sineux)

## Malaŵi

Records from June 2010–March 2011 include the following. A female **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* flew over c.6 km north of Mvuu Camp, on the Shire River, Liwonde National Park, on 4 August. A **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* of the nominate subspecies was repeatedly seen near Chelinda camp, Nyika National Park, on 25 December; this taxon is usually seen on northbound passage in February–March and there is apparently only one previous record

for December, on the Nyika. An **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* observed at Bua River Lodge on 21 June, and again in January, is the first sighting for Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve, although the species has long been suspected to occur there. A **Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* was at Kauma Sewage Ponds, Lilongwe, on 15 August. A **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* at Chintech, Lake Malaŵi, on 9 December is the first for this atlas square; this species is generally a scarce visitor. A **Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* was seen near the airstrip at Chelinda, Nyika National Park, on 29 December; there is only one previous record for Nyika, in December (LR).

## Morocco

Records from the period November 2010–May 2011 are as follows. Four **White-faced Storm-petrels** *Pelagodroma marina* were seen 22 nautical miles off Agadir on 30 April. Single **Great Bitterns** *Botaurus stellaris* were observed at Mechra Homadi dam on 12 November and Merja Zerga on 26 February. The **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* at Essaouira from 18 April 2010 was still present on 30 April. A **Great Egret** *Egretta alba* remained at the Souss estuary through December. Two **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* were reported from Larache on 3 January. Three **Brent Geese** *Branta bernicla* were at La Sarga, Dakhla, on 11 January. A male **Green-winged Teal** *Anas carolinensis* was at Massa River mouth on 28 March. A male **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* was seen between Sidi Bettache and Sidi Yaya Zäer on 26 February, whilst another was photographed at Kénitra on 16 May. A **Rüppell's Vulture** *Gyps rueppellii* photographed at Jbel Moussa, Tangier peninsula, on 7 May may be the first documented record for northern Morocco. A young **Spanish Imperial Eagle** *Aquila adalberti* was reported flying north at Cascade d'Ouzoud on 20 February. A **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was near Mgouna, between Boumalne and Ouarzazate, on 11 May. Crane records include

a **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* at Gleb Jdiañe on 2 March, a **Little Crake** *P. parva* photographed at Oued Loukkos, Larache, on 16 April, and two **Corn Crakes** *Crex crex* flushed at Oued Massa in the second half of January. An immature **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* was reportedly found dead at Tahaddart, Tanger, on 16 January.

An **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was observed at Essaouira in mid March and photographed there on 11 April. Remarkably, a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* at Ouarzazate on 9–10 April was photographed at the same inland desert site as one on 24 April 2006. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* was reported from Sidi Moussa, Oualidia, between 19 February and 14 March, with a **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* also there on 21 March. An adult **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* was seen at Oued Souss, Agadir, on 12 December, whilst no fewer than 11 adult and five immature **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* were claimed from Dakhla on 11 January. In spring 2011, four **Cape Gulls** *L. dominicanus vetula* including a breeding pair were present at Khnifiss lagoon in south-west Morocco, which confirms the species' presence in the area. Many previous claims from Khnifiss lagoon have been shown to be misidentified **Great Black-backed Gulls** *L. marinus* and most if not all nesting large black-backed gulls reported at this site since February 2008 in fact concern the latter species (*Birding World* 24: 68–76, 2011). Cape Gull is thus still a rarity with only a few adults to be accepted for Khnifiss lagoon (those documented by photographs were two on 23 April 2009, one on 20 May 2009 and two on 7 July 2010), and just a few photographed though not yet accepted elsewhere in Morocco (a first-winter on 16 April 2009 at Dakhla, Western Sahara, and an adult at Oued Souss, Agadir, on 10 April 2010; *Dutch Birding* 32: 204, plate 262). Seven **Great Black-backed Gulls** were also present, with some nesting; the breeding records at Khnifiss lagoon are the first for Africa,



c.2,000 km south of the nearest known breeding site in France.

A male **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* was at Oued Sayed on 9 April. Two **Dunn's Larks** *Eremalauda dunni* were claimed from Tagdilt track on 3 March, whilst one was photographed at Derkaoua, Merzouga, on 9 April. An **Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* was seen near the bridge over the Massa River in the second half of January. Numbers of **Eastern Olivaceous Warblers** *Hippolais pallida reiseri* appear to be higher than previously thought; for example, eight were found in tamarisks by Mansour Lake near Ouarzazate between 31 March and 18 April. A **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* was between Tamagourte and Outerbat, Central High Atlas, on 10 May. Up to three **Pied Crows** *Corvus albus* 152 km north of Dakhla, Western Sahara, were seen again in late December and were still present in March (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 56–57, 138–143, 203–210; www.go-south.org and www.surfbirds.com).

## Mozambique

At least three **Great Bitterns** *Botaurus stellaris* were seen along the Limpopo River floodplain near Xai Xai on 13 March; there are very few records this far south in the country. As has become the norm in recent years, a large flock of **Crab-plovers** *Dromas ardeola* was present at Ponta da Barra in February. Several exhausted **Sooty Terns** *Sterna fuscata* were reported from the coast, e.g. at Guinjata Bay and at Paindane, in late May; strong winds appear to have blown these birds inshore. A **Speckle-throated Woodpecker** *Campethera scriptoricauda* was observed west of Chinizua on 6 January (per *TH, SO*). A **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* was seen and sound-recorded on 8 March at Nhamapaza River bridge, c.120 km north of Gorongosa on the road to Caia (*EM*).

## Namibia

Records from December 2010–early June 2011 include the following. Two **Pink-backed Pelicans**

*Pelecanus rufescens* were at Otjivero Dam, near Omitara c.90 km east of Windhoek, on 30 January, with two at Gammams Sewage Works, Windhoek, on 12 June; this species is very unusual in the centre of the country. A **Knob-billed Duck** *Sarkidiornis melanotos* landed in a garden in Walvis Bay on 17 February—an unusual coastal record. A **lineatus Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* was photographed 20 km south of Otjokavare on 20 March (NP; Fig. 12). A **Bat Hawk** *Macheirhamphus alcinus* was reported on 21 May c.50 km south-east of Dordabis, well south of its known range. On 31 January, an **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* was at Gorengab Water Care Plant, Windhoek; this species is rare outside the Caprivi Strip.

### Eurasian Oystercatchers

*Haematopus ostralegus* were reported from Walvis Bay Salt Works in late December–January (two) and Sandwich Harbour on 22–23 January (one). In Swakopmund, a **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* was present at Mile 4 Salt Works in early February and a **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii* on 8 January. An **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was claimed from Luderitz in late December. At least two **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* occurred at Mile 4 Salt Works, north of Swakopmund, in January–June. **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were present at Walvis Bay Salt Works throughout the period, fluctuating from at least two to 13 (in late January), with at least four still there



**Figure 12.** Black Kite / Milan noir *Milvus migrans lineatus*, 20 km south of Otjokavare, Namibia, 20 March 2011 (Niall Perrins)

on 3 June. The **Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* first seen at Walvis Bay on 22 October (cf. *Bull. ABC* 18: 101), was still present in late January (per *TH, SO*). A **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* was in Etosha National Park on 8 December (*PP*).

A **Senegal Coucal** *Centropus senegalensis* was reported between Windhoek and the international airport on 2 April; this is substantially further south than the species' normal range. The **Woodland Kingfishers** *Halcyon senegalensis* reported from Monte Christo Guest Farm, c.30 km north-west of Windhoek, in November were still present in early February. Also there, a pair of **Black-backed Puffbacks** *Dryoscopus cubla* was feeding a juvenile in February. A **House Crow** *Corvus splendens* near the entrance to Walvis Bay on 3 June was a surprising record and possibly the first for Namibia. In February, a major influx of **Village Indigobirds** *Vidua chalybeata* occurred into the Windhoek area (per *TH, SO*).

## Niger

The following records (all per *JB, UL*) are based on new entries in the Niger Bird DataBase (NiBDaB, www.bromus.net/nibdab). Most remarkable was the sighting of a second-calendar year **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* of the dark North African subspecies *homeyeri* on 20 November 2010 at Termit (*TW, JN, TR*; Fig. 13); previous records from Niger are all from the Air, >300 km away. Observations of **Black-bellied Bustard** *Lissotis melanogaster* and **Savile's Bustard** *Lophotis savilei* in Parc International du 'W' on 9 May 2006 (*SG*) constitute the seventh and the 54th records entered in the NiBDaB respectively. According to Giraudoux *et al.* (1988. Avifaune du Niger. *Malimbus* 10: 1–140), Savile's was known only from 'W', whilst Black-bellied had a wider distribution in southern Niger. In the NiBDaB, post-1988, the reverse is the case: Black-bellied records are only from 'W' and 50 km north, whilst Savile's has a rather wider distribution as far north as Gadabeji. Visual confusion





**Figure 13.** Golden Eagle / Aigle royal *Aquila chrysaetos homeyeri*, Termit, Niger, 20 November 2010 (John Newby / Sahara Conservation Fund)

between the two species is likely and records of these two species from Niger demand closer scrutiny. An observation of **African Green Pigeon** *Treron calvus* in Parc International du 'W' on 19 March 2011 is the first record for the country since the 1980s (TR, RB et al.). The Centre de Recherches par le Baguage des Populations d'Oiseaux (CRBPO) in Paris generously made data available on more than 2,800 birds ringed in Niger. During ringing projects in 1999–2003, mostly in the valley of the Niger River at Ndounga, 15 km south-east of Niamey, and at Parc International du 'W', a **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* was ringed on 14 February 2003 (first record for Niger); four **Little Crakes** *P. parva* (only four other records); 36 **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* (only one previous record), including one of the nominate subspecies; ten **Savi's Warblers** *Locustella luscinioides* (first records for Niger; two further records since and one earlier one to be followed up); and a **Grasshopper Warbler** *L. naevia* on 31 March 2002 at Kollo (first record for Niger) (J-LC, J-MC).

### Nigeria

A male **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* visited a garden in Jos on 26 April 2011 (MH); according to Elgood et al. (1994. *The Birds of Nigeria*) the species is uncommon to rare and possibly only a vagrant in the country.



**Figure 14.** Greater Sand Plover / Pluvier de Leschenault *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Rodrigues, 27 May 2010 (Peter Steward)

### Rodrigues

An adult non-breeding **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* was photographed on mudflats between Port Sud Est and Parc Tortue on 27 May 2010 (Fig. 14). The only previously reported observations are of one at Port Sud Est on 25 April and two at Baix aux Huitres on 27 April 1999 (cf. *Bull. ABC* 9: 16–24) (DS).

### Rwanda

A **Rockefeller's Sunbird** *Cinnyris rockefelleri* was reported from Nyungwe (Forest) National Park on 18 November 2010. The bird was being chased by a Regal Sunbird *C. regia* and at one stage both birds perched next to each other. The extensive red and limited yellow on the underparts, as well as the call, which was totally different from that of Regal Sunbird, were noted (MC).

### Senegal

A flock of c.1,500 **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* was observed on the outskirts of Gossas, between Djourbel and Kaolack, on 4 January 2011; large flocks have become very unusual. In Djoudj National Park, at least five **Black Storks** *C. nigra* were seen on 1–2 January and an immature **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* was photographed (SD).

### Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from the period December 2010–May 2011 include the first **Knob-billed Duck** *Sarkidiornis melanotos*, an immature or female, on Grand Terre,

Aldabra, from 16 March, which was joined by a second on 11 April. The first **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* for Seychelles, discovered on Bird Island on 17 November (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 102), remained until 15 December and was ringed while there. Almost certainly the same individual was present at Victoria, Mahé, from 28 December to 6 April. A **Grey-headed Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala* on Desroches on 29 December was the second for the archipelago, whilst a **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* on Picard, Aldabra, on 17 February was the third.

Also of interest were a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* on Bird Island on 9 December; a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* on Desroches on 7 February; a **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* at Mont Fleuri, Mahé, on 5 January (ten previous records); a first-winter **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* on La Digue on 30 December; an **Eleonora's Falcon** *F. eleonora* on Alphonse on 23–25 December, with another on 20 January; an **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* on Aldabra on 11–12 January (eight records); a **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* on Frégate from 15 November to 6 February; a **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* on Aldabra on 5 December (five records); an immature **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* on Aride on 1 December, with two on Cousine on 17 December and one also there on 10–14 January; an immature **Lesser Cuckoo** *C. poliocephalus* on North Island on 15 January (16 records); a **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops* on Frégate on 10 January–11 March (seven records); 2–3 **Common House Martins** *Delichon urbicum* on Bird Island on 19 December (ten records); single **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* on Bird Island on 20 December, Alphonse on 10–14 January, Frégate on 7 February and Aldabra on 6 April; single **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* on Bird Island on 1–2 December, Aldabra on 12 December and Alphonse on 10–14 January; and a male **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* on Bird Island on 2–3 December (eight records) (AS).



## Sierra Leone

The following records, from February–March 2011, were made in the north-eastern part of Gola Forest. A singing **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* was seen at the forest edge near Mogbaima on 1 and 6 March. A **Brown Nightjar** *Veles binotatus* was singing in forest near Congo on 10–11 March. A male **Yellow-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna elata* was observed bringing food to a sealed-up nest in a large tree adjacent to the Moro River on 28 February–5 March. A singing **Yellow-footed Honeyguide** *Melignomon eisentrauti* was near Mogbaima on 6 March, with another daily at exactly the same spot in the Congo / Levuma area on 7–11 March. **Gola Malimbe** *Malimbus ballmanni* was observed once near Mogbaima, in a mixed-species flock (RD).

## Somalia

Highlights from a visit, on 11 December 2010, to the plains and bush country east of Hargeisa, Somaliland, down to the Tuuyoo plains, included **Heuglin's** *Neotis heuglini*, **Little Brown** *Eupodotis humilis* and **Buff-crested Bustards** *Lophotis gindiana*, several confiding **Somali Coursers** *Cursorius somalensis* as well as **Double-banded Coursers** *Rhinoptilus africanus*, six lark species including **Lesser Hoopoe** *Alaemon hamertoni*, **Blanford's** *Calandrella blanfordi* and **Somali Short-toed Larks** *C. somalica*, **Somali Wheatears** *Oenanthe phillipsi*, and **Arabian** *Sylvia leucomelaena* and **Ménétries' Warblers** *S. mystacea*. A week later, an area close to Hargeisa produced some additional species including **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* and **Steppe Grey Shrike** *Lanius (meridionalis) pallidirostris*, two taxa with apparently few records for Somaliland (for a full report, see [www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Somaliland/visiting.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Somaliland/visiting.html)). Somaliland is now generally safe (cf. *Bull. ABC* 18: 86–92) and local guide Abdi Jama ([abdi.jama@ymail.com](mailto:abdi.jama@ymail.com)) can provide logistics and advice (BP).

## South Africa

Records from late December 2010–early June 2011 include the following. Cruise trips between Cape Town and Walvis Bay reported several **Bulwer's Petrels** *Bulweria bulwerii* and large numbers of **Red Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* in January, and several **Leach's Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* and **Red Phalaropes** in early March. A trawler operating north-west of Cape Columbine in early March produced an adult **Salvin's Albatross** *Thalassarche (cauta) salvini*, a young **Southern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea (e.) epomophora*, a **Leach's Storm-petrel** and two **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** *Puffinus carneipes*. Also in early March, two **Wandering Albatrosses** *D. exulans* were reported c.150 nautical miles south of Agulhas, with two more on 25 May; whilst on 8 March a **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebastria fusca* was seen c.32 nautical miles south-west of Hout Bay. On 8 April, a **Chatham Albatross** *Thalassarche (cauta) eremita* was photographed south of Cape Point; this is apparently only the fourth record in southern Africa. A **White-headed Petrel** *Pterodroma lessonii*, and **Sooty** and **Wandering Albatrosses**, were observed inside the 200 nautical mile zone from a boat returning from Tristan da Cunha in early May. Noteworthy species seen during pelagic trips out of the Cape Town area include single **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** on 5, 14 and 26 March; a **Spectacled Petrel** *Procellaria (aequinotialis) conspicillata* on 14 March; a **Wandering Albatross** on 15 May; and a **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* and a **South Polar Skua** *Catharacta maccormicki* on 12 June. Single **Leach's Storm-petrels** were seen c.17 and c.75 nautical miles south of Cape Point in early April. In the Eastern Cape, a **Grey Petrel** *Procellaria cinerea* was found on the beach at St. Francis Bay on 3 February; it subsequently died. A **Broad-billed Prion** *Pachyptila vittata* was found dead at Camps Bay, Western Cape, on 11 May.

Around mid January a **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* was seen

c.70 nautical miles offshore close to Mozambique waters. Another landed briefly on a boat c.40 nautical miles south-east of Cape Agulhas, Western Cape, on 29 March; this constitutes only the second record for the province. Also in Western Cape, an adult **Brown Booby** *S. leucogaster*, discovered on Malgas Island in Saldanha Bay on 27 January, is the first record for the province and one of only a handful for the subregion. A **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* stayed in the Durban harbour area, KwaZulu-Natal, from 16 January until 6 March at least; in early May, two were reported from the same area, with one off Richards Bay.

Following the influx of **African Openbills** *Anastomus lamelligerus* throughout the country in late 2009 (see *Bull. ABC* 17: 124), a few were still being reported in Western Cape, including 1–2 in Vermont, west of Hermanus, in late December–February; two in the Koue Bokkeveld area on 1 February; one at Verlorenvlei, Eland's Bay, on 18 March; one between Malagas and the N2 on 21 March; and one at Kingswood Golf Estate, George, in early May. Western Cape's first **Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus* was located in the grounds of Somerset College near Somerset West on 1 February.

About 30 reports were received of **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* throughout the country until early April at least. A **Rüppell's Vulture** *Gyps rueppellii* was at a 'vulture restaurant' at Shelanti Game Ranch, Limpopo, on 13–19 March. A male **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* was at Sterkfontein Dam near Harrismith, Free State, in late January—possibly the same individual was present in 2010. An adult male **Montagu's Harrier** *C. pygargus* was reported from Entabeni Nature Reserve, Limpopo, on 4 January, whilst an immature was in West Coast National Park (=NP), Western Cape, on 5 February. Single **Western Marsh Harriers** *C. aeruginosus* were reported from three locations in KwaZulu-Natal—Ntsikeni Nature Reserve on 13 January, Darvill Bird Sanctuary on



16 January, and the Nibela Peninsula on 3 February—as well as at Nylsvlei, Limpopo, on 6 February, and Kgomo-Kgomo/Zaagkuil drift, North West Province, on 13 March.

Records of **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* include a male at Lombardini Game Farm, Eastern Cape, on 4 January; 12 west of Knysna, Western Cape, on 15–16 January; nine at the Kalahari Game Reserve, Northern Cape, on 10 February; a female south of George, Western Cape, on 15 February; at least 18 at Barrington, Western Cape, on 3 March; a female near Bontebok NP, Western Cape, on 6 March; and at least 15 between Barrington and Karatara on the same date. A female **Red-footed Falcon** *F. vespertinus* was photographed at Mkambati Reserve on the northern Transkei coast, Eastern Cape, on 13 February; this seems to be only the second record in the province. In Limpopo, a Red-footed Falcon was seen at Wolfhuiskraal on 27 March. A **Sooty Falcon** *F. concolor* stayed near Phalaborwa, Limpopo, on 3–7 February.

It was apparently a good season for **Striped Crakes** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*, which were reported from Kgomo-Kgomo (one on 20 February); southern Kruger NP (a pair with at least two chicks in late February); Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga (one on 6 March); Manyeleti Private Game Reserve, Mpumalanga (one on 11–12 March); and again Kruger NP (one on 14 March). In North West Province, a **Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana* was reported from the Kgomo-Kgomo area on 6 February.

In Mpumalanga, a **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* was present near Ermelo in February, with another at Manyeleti Private Game Reserve on 11–12 March. **Bronze-winged Coursers** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* were reported c. 12 km north of Potchefstroom, North West Province, on 3 January (a pair); at Southport, KwaZulu-Natal, in mid February (one); and c. 40 km from East London, Eastern Cape, on 10 March. In North West Province, a **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola*

*pratincola* stayed at Kgomo-Kgomo from 22 March until 9 April at least. In Western Cape, a **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was reported in West Coast NP on 25 January and, possibly the same individual, at Velddrif on 29 January; one was on Langebaan lagoon on 3 April. An **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* stayed at Cape Point in late December.

The **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* at Woodbourne Pan in Knysna, Western Cape, remained from mid December until the end of the month at least; it was present again on 4 March. Another stayed at Rocher Pan in March, while on 3 April one was reported from Langebaan lagoon. Single **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis* were present in Eastern Cape near St. Francis Bay on 24 December and at the Kei River mouth on 11–21 April at least (Fig. 15). A **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* was at West Coast NP in February. **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were reported from the Mapone River at Ngala Safari Lodge on 29 December; in KwaZulu-Natal in early January; near the Malalane Gate, Kruger NP, on 28 January; and in the Kgomo-Kgomo area, North West Province, on 29 January. On 2 February, a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* was at Sovermyndam, Northern Cape—a rather unusual inland location for this species. A **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* was at Tankatara Salt Pans, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 6–7 March. Also at Port Elizabeth, single **Red-necked Phalaropes** *P. lobatus*



**Figure 15.** Buff-breasted Sandpiper / Bécasseau roussâtre *Tryngites subruficollis*, Kei River mouth, South Africa, 21 April 2011 (Niall Perrins)

were present on the Marina Salt Pans on 5 February and Tankatara Salt Pans on 7–8 March. Three **Red Phalaropes** were reported at sea c. 35 nautical miles west of Cape Columbine, Western Cape, on 3 February, with eight seen c. 24 nautical miles west of Cape Point on 12 March. One stayed on a dam c. 20 km north-east of Harrismith, Free State, on 13–26 February.

A **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* was observed around Dyer Island, Western Cape, on 11 March; what was almost certainly the same individual was reported again on 7 May. In the same province, another was at Yzerfontein on 20–21 March. One in full breeding plumage stayed at Cape Recife, Port Elizabeth, from 19 April until 6 May at least, whilst on 18 June one was reported at Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape. An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* stayed at East London, Eastern Cape, from 9 February until 18 May at least; on 17 April two were present. The **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* that has been visiting Cape Recife, Port Elizabeth, for some ten years was back in late April and remained until late May at least.

A **Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* was near Umzumbe, KwaZulu-Natal, on 29 December. At least two **African Palm Swifts** *Cypsiurus parvus* were still present in Beaufort West, Western Cape, on 14 May. In Northern Cape, a **Grey-hooded Kingfisher** *Halcyon albiventris* was at Tswalu Kalahari Reserve on 6 January and one was photographed at Kathu on 26 February; these may be the first province records. On 29 January, a **White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis* was in Kruger NP; this is only the 12th sighting in southern Africa. A **Southern Carmine Bee-eater** *M. nubicoides* discovered on 30 March in Nature's Valley and still present on 2 April is apparently only the second record for Western Cape. In Western, Eastern and Northern Cape an influx of **European Rollers** *Coracias garrulus* occurred in late December–early April, with tens being reported. Single **Lilac-breasted Rollers** *C. caudatus*



were near Kenhardt, Northern Cape, on 26 January (a juvenile) and near Paul Roux, Free State, on 27 January. Probably the first for Western Cape stayed near Merweville from 23 February until 20 March at least. In Eastern Cape, one was near the Kei River mouth in March.

In January, single **Dusky Larks** *Pinarocorys nigricans* were seen in Mokala NP, south-west of Kimberley, and at Ophathe Nature Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal. Both **Grey Wagtails** *Motacilla cinerea* at Debegeni Falls, Limpopo, were still present on 20 February, with at least one on 8 March. One stayed at Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens, Gauteng, from 27 January until 1 March and another at Boulders Camp, Kruger NP, on 21–22 February. Several **Marsh Warblers** *Acrocephalus palustris* were calling in the Wilderness area on the Garden Route on 20 March—a very rare species in the Western Cape. In Northern Cape, an influx of **Chestnut Weavers** *Ploceus rubiginosus* occurred with some being seen until April. A **Purple Indigobird** *Vidua purpurascens* was at Klein Baai near Gansbay, Western Cape, on 31 December. A flock of **Black-headed Canaries** *Serinus alario*, including several of the ‘Damara’ race, were present south of Eland’s Bay, Western Cape, on 12 March (sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com, per TH).

## Tanzania

Records from February 2011 include the following. Of most interest were at least 23 **Little Terns** *Sterna albifrons* at Speke’s Bay, Lake Victoria, on 9–10th, an unprecedented number at this site. Apparently Little and Saunders’s Terns *S. saundersi* in non-breeding plumage cannot be reliably separated, but a summer-plumaged individual was identified as a Little Tern (Fig. 16). An **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Aviceda cuculoides* was near the entrance to Arusha National Park on 7th and a pair of **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* at Olduvai Gorge Museum on 15th. At Speke’s Bay, a group of eight **Heuglin’s**

**Coursers** *Rhinoptilus cinctus* was seen, whilst five **White-fronted Plovers** *Charadrius marginatus* on 10th is a high count. A **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* was in Lake Manyara National Park on 8th. A pair of **Purple-throated Cuckooshrikes** *Campephaga quiscalina* was at Elephant Caves, Gibbs Farm, on 17th. Four **Short-tailed Larks** *Pseudalaemon fremantlii* were in the Serengeti between Seronera and Naabi on 12th and an **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum* was in the Olduvai Gorge Museum area on 15th (PR).

## Togo

Forest patches on the Togo plateau visited in February 2010 (Klouto / Misahöhe) and elsewhere (Forêt Classée d’Assoukoko at 08°–08°13’N along the Ghana border, south to Djodji, Bénali, Kougnohou, Kpété Béna, and Dzogbégan on the Danyi Plateau) in March–May 2011 for four weeks, produced many records of interest. Four days were also spent in Keran National Park in January 2010 and March 2011, and one day on the lower Mono River (Avévé) on 29–30 April 2011. With forest destruction increasing, Assoukoko is now the single largest block of rain forest in the country, at over 150 km<sup>2</sup>, with c.100 km<sup>2</sup> officially protected.

Eight species appear to be new for Togo (cf. Cheke, R. A. & Walsh, J. F. 1996. *The Birds of Togo*): **Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx olivinus* (one singing in Assoukoko forest on 25 March 2011); **Willcocks’s Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksii* (singles singing near Agomé-Tomwé, Kpalimé, on 23 February 2010, at Assoukoko forest, Diguingué, on 22 March 2011,

and near Kpété Béna on 1 April 2011); **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* (observed in riparian forest on both visits to Keran National Park); **Kemp’s Longbill** *Macrosphenus kempii* (common in thickets in Assoukoko forest, Djodji, Bénali and Klouto); **Green Sunbird** *Anthreptes rectirostris* (a male in forest near Klouto on 21 February 2010); **Tiny Sunbird** *Cinnyris minullus* (one singing and well seen at Klouto on 22 February 2010; also a few near Kpété Béna on 30 March and 1 April 2011: tape-recorded); **Sooty Boubou** *Laniarius leucorhynchus* (two pairs duetting near Klouto on 22 February 2010 and two pairs heard near Dzogbégan on 4 May 2011; one previous record considered unlikely, cf. *Malimbus* 29: 85); and **Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea* (flocks drinking in the Kéran River on 29–30 January 2010).

Other records of interest include the following. **Nkulengu Rail** *Himantornis haematopus* was heard from Assoukoko south to Kpété Béna (known from one old specimen). **White-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura pulchra* was heard commonly throughout the forest zone (three specimens). **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* was heard and seen near Assoukoko and also tape-recorded 10 km east of Kougnohou (two specimens). A **Barred Owlet** *Glaucidium capense* was singing in ‘cocoa forest’ at Djodji, Kpété Béna. **Black-shouldered Nightjar** *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis*, previously known only from two specimens and a sight report, was heard at Assoukoko and Klouto. A **White-bellied Kingfisher** *Alcedo leucogaster* was observed in Assoukoko forest (collected once before). A small



**Figure 16.** Little Terns / Sterne naine *Sterna albifrons*, Speke’s Bay, Lake Victoria, Tanzania, 10 February 2011 (Wes Serafin)



population of **Yellow-throated Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus subsulphureus* was discovered around Kpété Béna and at Klouto (one aural record). A **Rufous-sided Broadbill** *Smithornis rufolateralis* was seen and tape-recorded in Assoukoko forest (two specimens). **Western Bearded Greenbul** *Criniger barbatus* was seen and heard near Klouto and at Dzogbégan (one specimen). **Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush** *Stizorhina finschi* was found near Dikpéléou (north of Assoukoko), Kpété Béna and Klouto (one sight record). **Forest Robin** *Stiphrornis erythrothorax*, previously known from two specimens, was found commonly at all localities. Playback of its tape-recorded song brought a **Blue-shouldered Robin Chat** *Cossypha cyanocampter* into full view near Djodji; the species was also singing near Kpété Béna and Bénali (one specimen). **Sharpe's Apalis** *Apalis sharpii*, previously known from a single sight record, was found commonly in Assoukoko forest and also at Djodji, Bénali, Dzogbégan and Klouto. **White-browed Forest Flycatcher** *Fraseria cinerascens*, discovered in Togo in 2005 (cf. *Bull. ABC* 15: 205) was singing and seen along the Assoukoko River in Assoukoko forest. A pair of **Little Grey Flycatchers** *Muscicapa epulata* was seen near Kpété Béna (two sight records). **Red-cheeked Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophya blissetti* was found commonly in thickets (three records), whilst **Puvel's Illadopsis** *Illadopsis puveli* was common throughout, with several tape-recorded (two records, one a specimen). **Blue-throated Brown Sunbird** *Nectarinia cyanolaema* was observed near Assoukoko and Kpété Béna, on mistletoes (one sight record). Birds sounding like **Fiery-breasted Bushshrikes** *Malaconotus cruentus* (collected once before) were heard commonly in Assoukoko forest, and also at Djodji, Bénali, Dzogbégan and Klouto. All four birds seen (at the latter two localities) had yellow underparts, with one and probably two, looking like Lagden's Bushshrike *M. lagdeni* (with spots on the wing-coverts, and an all-grey head respectively). More research is

needed. **Forest Chestnut-winged Starling** *Onychognathus fulgidus*, previously known only from Misahohe, was found further north, with one at Dzogbégan and a pair at Assoukoko.

The known range of many species was extended north to Assoukoko forest, such as **Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx mechowi*, **Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster*, **Blue-headed Coucal** *C. monachus*, **White-crested Hornbill** *Tropicranus albocristatus*, **Little Grey Andropadus gracilis**, **Cameroon Sombre** *A. curvirostris* and **Slender-billed Greenbuls** *A. gracilirostris*, **Simple Leaflove** *Chlorocichla simplex*, **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, **Grey Longbill** *Macrosphenus concolor*, **Yellow-browed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera superciliaris*, **Many-coloured Bushshrike** *Malaconotus multicolor*, **Red-billed Helmetshrike** *Prionops caniceps*, **Yellow-mantled Weaver** *Ploceus tricolor*, **Crested Malimbe** *Malimbus malimbicus* and **Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch** *Nigrita bicolor*.

The lower Mono River (Avévé) is a new locality for several species, including **Ahanta Francolin** *Francolinus achantensis*, **Red-headed Lovebird** *Agapornis pullarius*, **Black-throated Coucal**, **Green-backed Woodpecker** *Campethera cailliautii*, **Cameroon Sombre Greenbul** and **Western Nicator** *Nicator chloris*, despite the original forest having been almost entirely replaced with *Elaeis* palm plantations interspersed with small thickets. **Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii*, found commonly at all forest localities on the western plateau, was also observed in riparian forest in Keran National Park, a northerly extension. A few **Fork-tailed Drongos** *D. adsimilis* (*sensu lato*) occur very locally in the forest zone (e.g. Tomegbé to Kpété Béna, Klouto / Misahöhe), in farmbush with scattered large trees (*contra* Cheke & Walsh 1996); the Berlin Museum holds specimens from Misahöhe and surroundings, some initially misidentified as Shining Drongo *D. atripennis*—the latter was not found (FD-L, RJD).

## Uganda

Records from December 2010–May 2011 include the following. An adult **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmii* was photographed at Kidepo, in the extreme north-east, on 26 April. In January, two **White-backed Night Herons** *Gorsachius leuconotus* were at Lake Mburo on 24th, three **Rufous-bellied Herons** *Ardeola rufiventris* at the Airstrip Ponds near Kyotera on 18th, and 67 **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca* at Doho rice scheme on 12th. In Queen Elizabeth National Park (=NP), two **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus* were on Lake Munyanyange on 14 April, whilst 1,350 **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* were on Masech Crater Lake on 28 January (RS). A **Lesser Flamingo** in Lake Mburo NP on 5 March appears to be the first for the park (AB). On 11 January, 2,214 **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna bicolor* were at Kibimba rice scheme reservoir. Four **White-backed Ducks** *Thalassornis leuconotus* were at the Airstrip Ponds on 18 January and a female / immature **Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* at Nachiwogo Bay, off Entebbe, on 9 December.

An **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Aviceda cuculoides* at Kidepo on 25 April constitutes an extension of its known range. A **Bat Hawk** *Macheirhamphus alcinus* was over Namowongo Market on the evening of 9 May and at Mulago Hill on the morning of 30 May. At Semliki, a **Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* and a **Long-tailed Hawk** *Urotriorchis macrourus* were observed on 28 December. A pale **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* flew over Port Bell on 18 December. A **Common** (=Kurrichane) **Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus* was at Lutembe on 4 February. On Mount Elgon, two **Buff-spotted Flufftails** *Sarothrura elegans* were singing at Kapchorwa research station on 7 May. **Allen's Gallinules** *Porphyrio alleni* were noted at Lake Mburo on 24 January (two adults) and at Mpologoma Swamp near Mbale on 5 May (one displaying). Forty **Red-knobbed Coots** *Fulica cristata* were in Nakiwogo Bay off Entebbe



on 6 January. Two **Lesser Jacanas** *Microparra capensis* were at the Airstrip Ponds on 18 January (RS).

An immature **White-fronted Plover** *Charadrius marginatus* in Murchison Falls NP on 15 February is a first for this site (AB; Fig. 17). The **Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*, discovered at Lutembe on 9 December (cf. *Bull. ABC* 18: 108), was still present on 5 January. About 90,000 **Grey-headed Gulls** *Larus cirrocephalus* were on the Musambwa Islands on 17 January. **Caspian Terns** *Sterna caspia* were at Nachiwogo Bay on 9 December (two), Lutembe on 20 December (one), Lake Munyanyange on 25 January (one in a roost of 2,400 Gull-billed Terns *S. nilotica*) and Lutembe on 14–18 May (three). At least 500 **Whiskered Terns** *Chlidonias hybrida* in breeding plumage were at Ggaba Water Works on 17 April. Two **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were at Lutembe on 5 January, whilst 904 on the Kasinga Channel, Queen Elizabeth NP, on 27 January was a high count. Two **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse** *Pterocles lichtensteinii* were at Kidepo on 25 April. A **Northern White-faced Scops Owl** *Ptilopsis leucotis* was calling at Muyenga on 16 April.

A pair of **Abyssinian Ground Thrushes** *Zoothera piaggiae* showed well in primary forest above Kapchorwa research station on Mount Elgon on 6 May. Also there, a pair of **Black-faced Rufous Warblers** *Bathmocercus rufus* was nest building on 7 May; there are few breeding records in Uganda. At Kidepo, two **Rock-loving Cisticolas** *Cisticola*



**Figure 17.** Immature White-fronted Plover / Pluvier à front blanc *Charadrius marginatus*, Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda, 15 February 2011 (Artur Bujanowicz)

*aberrans* and a **Red-fronted Warbler** *Spiloptila rufifrons* were seen on 24–25 April. A pair of **Southern Black Flycatchers** *Melaenornis pammelaina* was in Lake Mburo NP on 12 April. An **Orange-tufted Sunbird** *Cinnyris bouvieri* was at Griffin Fall's campsite, Mabira Forest, on 22 May. A pair of **Violet-backed Starlings** *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* was feeding three fledged young at Kajjansi on 29 May; there are few breeding records for Uganda. A group of ten **Red-billed Buffalo Weavers** *Bubalornis niger* at Kidepo on 25 April is the second country record. Three **Dark-backed Weavers** *Ploceus bicolor* were on Mount Elgon on 6 May; the species was apparently last recorded there early last century. At Semliki, two **Orange-cheeked Waxbills** *Estrilda melpoda* were encountered on 27 December. A **Papyrus Canary** *Serinus koliensis* was at Mpologoma Swamp on 5 May (RS).

#### Zambia

In January 2011, large numbers of **Corn Crakes** *Crex crex*, **African Crakes** *C. egregia* and **Striped Crakes** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* appeared on farms around Choma, in the south, with for example four Striped Crakes being flushed in half an hour. Several **Collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula albicollis* were observed in miombo at the Nkanga River Conservation Area, just outside Choma, with two, both still in breeding plumage, being seen in less than an hour (DD per TH).

#### Zimbabwe

Single **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were reported between Harare and Mutare on 17 January; at Ilala Lodge, Victoria Falls, on 21 January; and the Buzi River area on 3 March. At least two **Western Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* were present outside Harare on 15 January. A **Striped Crake** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* was reported from Monavale Vlei, Harare, on 2 March, whilst an out-of-range **Olive Bee-eater** *Merops superciliosus* was in Matopos National Park on 6 March (per TH).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Abdulla Ali / Thebes Tours International (AA), Grant Atkinson (GA), André de Baerdemaeker (AdB), Roseline Beudels-Jamar (RB), Bryan Bland / Sunbird (BB), Marijke de Boer (MdB), Nik Borrow / Birdquest (NB), Nicky Bousfield (NBo), Chris Brewster (CB), Joost Brouwer (JB), Artur Bujanowicz (AB), Mike Buckland (MB), Marcell Claassen (MC), Jean-Louis Clavier (J-LC), Jean-Michel Coquillat (J-MC), Mary Crickmore (MC), Daniel Danckwerts (DD), Ron Demey (RD), Klaas-Douwe Dijkstra (KD), Stephane Doppagne (SD), Robert J. Dowsett (RJD), Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire (FD-L), Graham Ekins (GE), Sander Elzerman (SE), David Fisher (DF / Sunbird), Sylvain Garraud (SG), Julien Gonin (JG), Christophe Gruwier (CG), Trevor Hardaker (TH), Dean Hatty (DHa), David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours (DH), Mark Hopkins (MH), Colin Jackson (CJ), Ottavio Janni (OI), Mark Kirk (MK), Erling Krabbe (EK), Ulf Liedén (UL), Adam Manvell (AMa), Etienne Marais (EM), Antonio Mendoza (AM), Johannes Merz (JM), John Newby / Sahara Conservation Fund (JN), Ken Oake (KO), Mirjam van den Ouden (MvdO), Shaun Overmeyer (SO), Phil Palmer (PP), Niall Perrins (NP), Bram Piot (BP), Wouter Plomp (WP), Bruno Portier (BPo), Thomas Rabeil / Sahara Conservation Fund (TR), Peter Roberts (PR), Alex Rosendal (AR), David Showler (DS), Lionel Sineux (LS), Roger Skeen (RS), Graeme Skinner (GS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Axel Smets (ASm), Guy-Philippe Sounguet (G-PG), Tony Tree (TT), Steph Tyler (ST), Glen Valentine / Rockjumper Birding Tours (GV), Nico Venema (NV), Tim Wachter (TW), and from Africa—Birds & Birding, Birding World, Dutch Birding, sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com, www.go-south.org and www.surfbirds.com.

Contributions for Recent Reports can be sent to Ron Demey, Walter Thijsstraat 9, B-3500 Hasselt, Belgium and (preferably) by e-mail: rondemey1@gmail.com or recent\_reports@africanbirdclub.org



# Reviews



## Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume 15: weavers to New World warblers

Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott & David A. Christie (eds.), 2010. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions. 880 pp, 61 colour plates, 495 photographs. Hardback. ISBN 978-84-96553-68-2. UK£185.00.

So ... we have nearly reached the end, and for African birdwatchers there are only the buntings to come in volume 16 (due later this year). (The rest of the final volume will nearly entirely be comprised of New World species.)

Volume 15 contains four families of considerable interest, not to mention complexity—weavers (Ploceidae), whydahs and indigobirds (Viduidae), waxbills (Estrildidae) and finches (Fringillidae), as well as vireos, New World warblers, Hawaiian honeycreepers and the Olive Warbler *Peucedramus taeniatus* (Peucedramidae). The format by now must be well known to everyone and this volume certainly lives up to the standard. As usual, the taxonomy employed herein differs slightly from authorities such as the International Ornithological Congress list. For example, the quailfinches *Ortygospiza* spp. are lumped into one species (*O. atricollis*), but I did not find any taxonomic decisions that were truly novel, and there are usually notes on the various taxa not recognised and some rationale for the decisions taken.

The plates (by Tim Worfolk, Hilary Burn, Brian Small, Norman Arlott, David Pratt and David Quinn) are perhaps slightly wooden in places (personally, I prefer those in *Birds of Africa*). However, to cover all of the species in these groups, many of them of fairly similar appearance, is quite a feat in itself especially when both sexes (usually) and different subspecies (some) are included as well. As usual the selection of



photographs within the family essays range from the excellent to the stunning, particularly as many of them illustrate a point of behaviour or biology as well.

The customary Foreword this time is what amounts to a 'state of the art' piece on bird conservation. Written by four staff members of BirdLife it covers a wide range and provides a very useful summary of the main conservation issues and actions of today. Following brief notes on the distribution of threatened species and on the fairly widespread declines in many commoner birds, the bulk of the essay enters some detail in discussing the current main threats to birds—agriculture, unsustainable forestry, invasive alien species and disease, over-exploitation, infrastructure development, fire, water management, pollution and, of course, climate change. However, the essay concludes with a résumé of some actions that are being taken or that could be taken, ranging from site protection and management to species-focused action and the necessity to inspire and engage people in the whole process. (The essay has 13 pages of references too, so there is plenty of scope to find more detail if you need it.)

The price of the complete set is now nearly €2,700 (this special

price exists until October 2011) so is likely to be beyond most individual pockets, but if you need or want to know the basics concerning any bird in the world, as well as useful summaries of each group and the main talking points in ornithology this set has to be the place to start. However, the Lynx 'steam train' does not stop with this series. Volume 1 of *HMW* (the companion series on Mammals of the World) was published last year, while volume 2 is due in July 2011 and there will be six further volumes to come in due course.

Peter Lack

## Reed and Bush Warblers

Peter Kennerley & David Pearson, illustrated by Brian Small, 2010. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 712 pp, 42 colour plates, many photographs and maps. Hardback. ISBN 978-0-7136-6022-7. UK£65.00.

If the quality of a book can be measured by its weight then this work comes out top of its league! Weighing in at nearly 2 kg it is indeed a heavy book, but quality it also has and Kennerley and Pearson can be congratulated for producing one of the outstanding pieces of work on the identification of a group of birds since Hadoram Shirihai and his colleagues' book on *Sylvia Warblers* in the same series. *Reed and Bush Warblers* is part of the Helm, Identification guides, but it is an injustice to the authors to describe it as such. It is so much more—covering identification, similar species, voice (including sonograms), moult, habitat, behaviour, breeding habits, distribution, movements, description, in the hand characters, geographical variation, and taxonomy and systematics. In addition to the main section, there are several appendices listing such things as

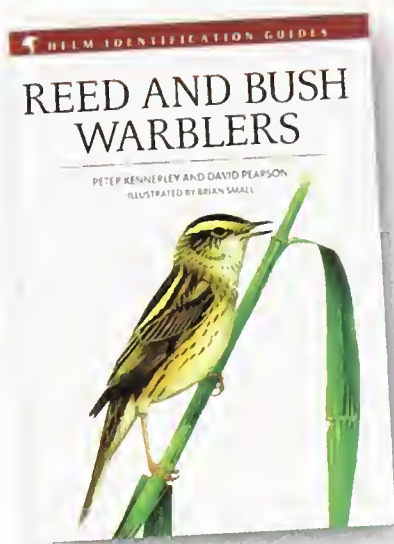


live and museum measurements, comparative field characters of similar species, and recent developments since 2010.

Reed and bush warblers (the families Locustellidae, Acrocephalidae and Cettiidae) are, of course, challenging both in terms of identification but also seeing them well in the field. This book will, therefore, not appeal to everyone, although it is a title that really should be on every serious birder's bookshelf as I can guarantee that it will be used far more as a reference guide than might initially be expected. The mostly superb photos, covering nearly all of the 112 species, in themselves are an invaluable reference source, whilst the 42 colour plates, painted by Brian Small, provide further material to aid identification of this tricky group of birds. The distribution maps, so often a disappointment in guides such as these, are large and well reproduced. The African distribution maps, in particular, are detailed, accurate and, in the case, for example, of African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus*, plotted by race—how good is that?

The taxonomy of this group, and the warblers (Sylviidae, *sensu lato*) as a whole, is complex and still poorly understood, despite much molecular research over the past decade. The authors have therefore adopted a pragmatic approach in deciding which genera to include, based on similarities in morphology and field appearance, and supported rather than led by molecular data. This may not meet the approval of everyone, and excludes some near relatives such as *Schoenicola* and *Megalurus*. Suffice to say that future molecular forensics will doubtless lead to major changes in the generic arrangements of Locustellidae and Cettiidae in particular.

To find fault with any component of this book has proved difficult, although it has not been for want of trying! However, there are two rather obvious points to make, which should be placed at the door of the publisher and not the authors or illustrator. Firstly, the sonograms are painfully small and, for a group



of birds that largely remain hidden from view to the observer, a key component of the identification process is vocalisations. For those of us who have invested time in understanding and interpreting songs and calls of birds using sonograms then I am afraid these are woefully inadequate. Secondly, the colour saturation on many of the plates is too rich (dark)—again, a shame for a group of birds where evaluation of subtle colour differentiation is critical to successful identification. This seems to be an all too common problem these days in printed media, a result it seems of publishers having little control of the printing process where the presses are run on another continent!

Jeff Baker

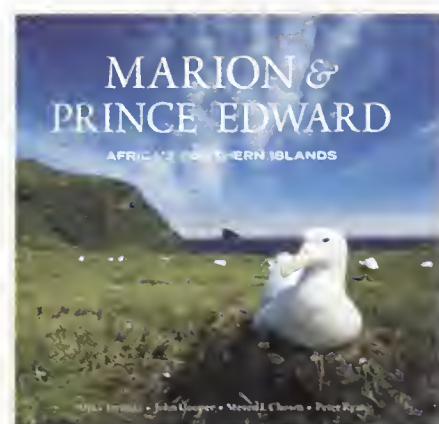
### Marion & Prince Edward— Africa's Southern Islands

Aleks Terauds, John Cooper, Steven L. Chown & Peter Ryan, 2010. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. 176 pp, many colour photographs. Hardback. ISBN 978-1-920338-42-8. SA Rand 350.

Measuring c.25 km by 15 km at its widest point, Marion Island is located at 46°54'S 37°44'E, while the much smaller Prince Edward Island lies just 22 km to the north-east. Situated almost 1,800 km south of Port Elizabeth in the southern Indian Ocean, these volcanic islands (collectively known as the Prince Edward Islands) form part of South Africa's Cape of Good Hope Province and were declared Special Nature Reserves by the country's government in 1995.

This book draws on studies of many aspects of the islands' natural history and is based on observations made during expeditions and by scientists based at Marion Island's research station. There have now been over 800 scientific publications on the islands. This is not a scientific tome and there are no lists of species, but it includes many facts and figures within the text. Six main chapters introduce the physical aspects of the islands, their vegetation and wildlife, their relationship with Man, and the conservation issues that exist. While the islands' birds feature in many of the lavish photographs, they are also dealt with in more detail within a 26-page section.

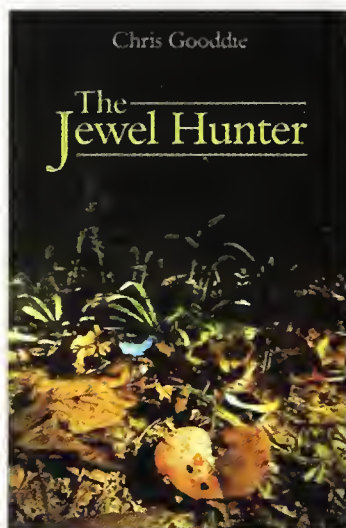
With the exception of Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche chlororhynchos* (which breeds only on Prince Edward Island), all other breeding bird species are shared between the islands. Most important is Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*, with the combined colonies of 3,500 pairs representing >40% of the world population. Understandably, these birds, together with Grey-headed *Thalassarche chrysostoma*, Sooty *Phoebastria fusca* and Light-mantled Albatrosses *P. palpebrata*, are prominently featured. There is also an abundance of information on the penguins, given that King *Aptenodytes patagonicus*, Macaroni *Eudyptes chrysolophus*, Gentoo *Pygoscelis papua* and Rockhopper Penguins *E. chrysocome* are all present. Other seabirds featured include Crozet Shag *Phalacrocorax melanogenis*, Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata* and Kerguelen Tern *S. virgata*. Petrels (of which 12 species are believed to breed in the islands) are given only relatively brief mentions.





The main aspect that impressed me with this book is the quality of the photographs—of which there are over 200, many filling an entire page. The quality of the whole production is lavish, with superb-quality printing on quality paper, and not at an exorbitant price.

Keith Betton



## The Jewel Hunter

Chris Goodie, 2010. Old Basing: Wild Guides. 424 pp, 136 photographs, 20 maps. Softback. ISBN 978-1-903657-16-4. UK£17.99.

Chris Goodie turned his back on a successful job in order to satisfy his dream to see every one of the world's 32 pittas in a single year. It is almost needless to say that he spent most of his time in Asia, but Goodie also details his quest to find African Pitta *Pitta angolensis* and Green-breasted Pitta *P. reichenowi* in two chapters, and those who have tried to see these two skulking species will recognise the nature of his challenge! His writing style is clear, and his self-

deprecating sense of humour makes the book an enjoyable read.

To satisfy his quest to see all of the pitta species, Chris travelled more than 200,000 km through Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, Sabah, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, Sri Lanka, Manus, and the Solomon Islands, as well as Uganda and Zambia. The task incredibly cost him nearly UK£30,000. Despite being a keen runner, he lost 13 kg in weight during his 'marathon' year!

To find Green-breasted Pitta, Chris travelled to south-west Uganda and allotted himself ten days to locate the bird. He succeeded on

25 July in Kibale Forest, where he managed to photograph it too. To find an African Pitta he travelled to Zambia and headed to the riverbeds near Siavonga, in the Lower Zambezi Valley close to the border with Zimbabwe. Finally, on 10 December, he managed to see the species, but not before a large amount of effort and perhaps the same amount of personal risk. Sadly, on this occasion, his camera failed to work while the bird posed in full view for ten seconds. As I read this, I felt Chris' mixed emotions in failing to obtain a photograph, while simultaneously realising his ambition to see every pitta in the world.

Although the focus of the book is pittas, Chris gives plenty of detail concerning the other birds he encountered during his travels—in fact he saw almost 2,000 species. This book is an interesting and enjoyable read, and made me want to get out birding, which seems an appropriate benchmark for any bird book.

Keith Betton



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## Obituaries

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### Dale Hanmer: 1937–2011

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Dale Hanmer, who died in the UK on 2 March 2011, was an indefatigable recorder of ornithological findings, particularly those based on her ringing work in Malaŵi in the 1970s and 1980s.

Born in South Africa in 1937, Dale trained as a zoologist and was apparently a demon squash player, fencer and showjumper before meeting and marrying her husband, Tony. His employment as an agricultural engineer took them to live on the Sucoma sugar estate in the extremely hot and humid Shire Valley in southern Malaŵi in the 1970s. The back garden of their estate house, backing onto Elephant Marsh, provided an ideal ringing site, particularly for Palearctic migrants. Here, Dale caught the first Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* and Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin *Erythropygia galactotes* to be recorded in Malaŵi. More importantly, through continuous ringing efforts she discovered a remarkable degree of wintering / passage site fidelity by Palearctic migrants, an extraordinary phenomenon so far south of the equator. Inevitably these findings were well documented in papers published in *Ostrich*, *Honeyguide*, *Safring News* and elsewhere.

The constant flow of Dale's papers on migrants by no means excluded studies on Afrotropical species. One particularly interesting paper identified the increase in the extent of the second primary wing-notch over successive moults in (Southern) Blue Waxbills *Uraeginthus angolensis*, a strange but consistent phenomenon that serves no obvious purpose.

Changing circumstances led to the need to move on. In 1992 Dale and Tony moved to the

latter's home country, Zimbabwe. Sadly, Tony died soon afterwards but Dale continued to pursue ringing activities around Mutare, firstly in public open spaces, then following up earlier studies on the movement of forest-associated species. Latterly, life became increasingly difficult in Zimbabwe so Dale migrated finally and for the first time to the Northern Hemisphere, to be closer to her daughter Julia and her family in England, where she continued to work on writing up her notes and observations until very recently.

Apart from her own studies, whilst not one to tolerate the self-aggrandisement of some establishment figures, Dale was very supportive of other ornithologists, especially newcomers. She was most aware of the need to keep publishing sightings and recorded data, not least 'for the increase of human knowledge'. New to this region of Africa in the 1980s, this writer found her to be fantastically supportive and recalls the endless stream of neatly typed letters offering detailed advice on ringing, atlas fieldwork and identification—frequently interspersed with efforts to prevent the undesirable attentions of mongooses, dealing with an irate Boomslang *Dispholidus typus*—and inevitably the latest trials and tribulations with domestic staff. All this would be set down with a wonderfully dry sense of humour.

With her passing, African ornithology has lost a remarkable 'worker': Dale Hanmer's greatest legacy is a prolific bibliography that, hopefully, will continue to encourage others to follow her example of 'getting it down in print'.

Bob Medland

### Gérard Morel: 1925–2011

423781-1531

Gérard Morel was an unusual person who nevertheless had a great influence on an entire generation of African ornithologists. Having arrived in Senegal in 1953, he stayed there for the rest of his professional life, together with his wife Marie-Yvonne, who was also an ornithologist,

until they retired in 1992. Based in the town of Richard Toll in the far north of the country, he made in-depth studies of, on the one hand, the avifauna of the Sahel, extended subsequently to the whole of the Senégambia region, and on the other the ecology and dynamics of grain-eating



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passerines, particularly Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* and Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus*. Thus he was the first person to rigorously quantify the abundance and relationships of sedentary and migratory populations, meanwhile creating a remarkable collection of birds, which formed the basis for systematic and precise studies. He generously welcomed numerous research workers who profited from his knowledge in order to complete their own investigations elsewhere in West Africa and to co-sign their results with him. Furthermore, we are grateful to him for the first modern guide to the identification of the birds of West Africa (with William Serle, 1977), the lack of which had been very evident to ornithologists in the region prior to this.

In cooperation with his colleagues working in Nigeria (Bob Sharland, Hilary Fry *et al.*) in 1979 he became a founder member of the West African Ornithological Society (Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest Africain) alongside those organisations already in existence in the east and south of the

continent. He was Vice President, then President of the Society for over 20 years, developing its journal *Malimbus* and participating actively in all of the Pan-African Ornithological Congresses, where he particularly encouraged the presence of native Africans and of Francophones. Times have really changed since then, both in Africa and among bird populations. However, like many African enthusiasts of my generation, I will never forget what I owe him and I would like those of a younger generation to also remember what they owe to forerunners like him, patient, obstinate, but passionate who, in conditions much more difficult than those encountered today, laid the foundations of African ornithology.

Jean-Marc Thiollay  
*President of the West African  
Ornithological Society*

This is an abridged version in English of an obituary originally prepared by the same author for *Malimbus*.—THE EDITORS.





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*Prince Ruspoli's Turaco photographed on a recent Sunbird tour to Ethiopia*

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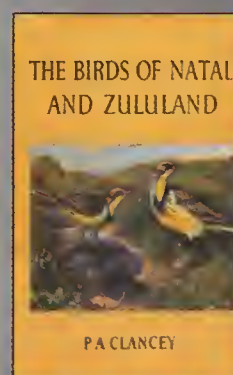
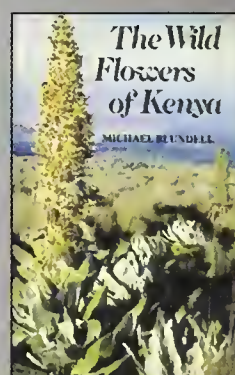
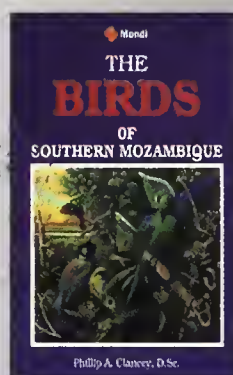
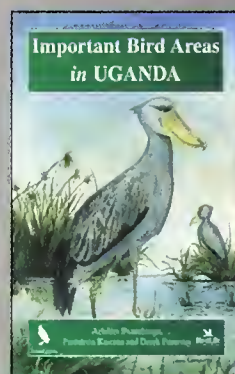
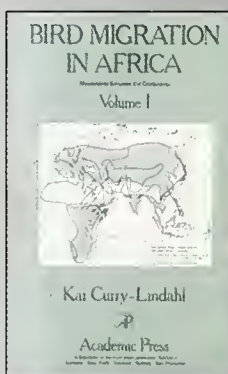
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The ABC welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa, here defined as the area covered by Collar, N.J. & Stuart, S.N. 1985. *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands: The ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, e.g. Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, e.g. the Tristan da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries.

Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent reviewers, where appropriate. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

### Submissions

Two hard (printed) copies should be sent unless submitting by e-mail (preferred) to the editor's address on the inside front cover. Typewritten manuscripts should be double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. All submissions are acknowledged.

Contributions are accepted in English or French: French summaries are required

for all papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting papers should supply a summary for translation into English, or French, as appropriate.

If you submit your contribution on CD or floppy disk, please state computer (e.g. IBM compatible PC, Macintosh) and word-processing package (e.g. Word, WordPerfect) used.

When sending your contribution on disk, please do not key anything in ALL CAPS (i.e. with the CAPS LOCK key depressed) unless the combination always occurs in that form (e.g. 'USA'). Do not use the carriage return key at the end of lines, and do not right justify the margins. When formatting tables use one tab, and not spaces, between each column. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should follow those on standard or readily available maps (preferably a recent edition of *The Times Atlas of the World*).

### Preferred names

Given the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requested to follow those used in *The Birds of Africa* Vols. 1-7. The African Bird Club has recently published ([www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/)

[checklist.html](#)) a checklist of birds in its region. This is based on *Birds of Africa* but incorporates more recent revisions where appropriate. It includes preferred scientific, English and French names, as well as races and alternatives used by publications widely used in Africa. For bird names this list should be used or at least the preferred name used there should be given as an alternative. For non-*Birds of Africa* species (e.g. from the Malagasy region) use Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993). Deviation from such works should be noted and the reasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it.

### Style

Authors are requested to follow conventions used in the *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* and to refer to a recent issue for guidance. A detailed style guide can be obtained, either electronically or as a hard copy, on request from the Managing Editor.



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The ABC Representatives scheme aims to support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region, for example, to answer queries to the Club, to solicit submissions for the bulletin, and possibly to arrange local meetings for members. Existing ABC members can contact their local Representative in the first instance with queries relating to the Club. ABC Representatives help to recruit new members in their region, for example, by distributing posters and arranging local advertising. In Africa, ABC Representatives help to identify opportunities to invest the ABC Conservation Fund and candidates for the Supported Membership scheme.

The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact the Membership Secretary at the Club address, e-mail [membership@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:membership@africanbirdclub.org).

ABC is seeking Country Representatives in the following countries, principally within the Club's region: Azores, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Madeira, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, Sierra Leone, Socotra, Somalia, St Helena, Sudan, Togo, Tristan da Cunha and USA.

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### AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interested in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1–2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to [AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the membership secretary: [membership@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:membership@africanbirdclub.org).

names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme now also includes clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Clubs accepted for membership under the scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities that may be published in the bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

### ABC Information Service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee

### Supported and Affiliated Membership

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£30 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own



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